

'Moulding form using color temperature and luminous shadow mixes.'

by Susan Harrison-Tustain

Introduction:

Would you like help to understand and paint numerous subjects? What artist wouldn't!

Let's take a look at color temperature. Of all the things I have learned on my journey I found color temperature was the one that took a while to really 'stick'. I have found there is a much easier way to learn about this – so read on – enjoy the dramatic effect this color temperature awareness will have on your paintings. Then add to that the information on creating luminous shadow hues. Your paintings will sing with naturalistic color and as time moves on – I will extend on this information.

You will also see information on color temperature coming up in the future on my Forum. So keep a good watch for that as well as so many other invaluable hints, tips and articles as well.

For this article I will use a floral study as a 'vehicle' to introduce many invaluable hints and tips.

If you are just 'feeling your way' when it comes to painting flowers - I suggest you initially choose a flower with very few petals or even choose a partially open bud that shows a predominant large piece of petal – as opposed to a flower with numerous tiny petals. Multiple petals can be stunning to look at but overwhelming to paint. You can create an equally commanding painting with either. Be kind to yourself and choose the less intensive, fewer petal option!

Once your drawing is complete, concentrate on each petal separately by narrowing down your focus to a small area. If you look at the 'whole' - it can feel like a maze. Keep your focus on the area you are painting until you have blocked in your underpainting. This will give you more confidence.

My first step is to create a tonal under-painting. Creating a 'map' by underpainting the light and dark areas will stand you in good stead for the rest of the painting.

In nature, the form of each petal is described using warm and cool shades of similar colors. For instance a red rose will gradually become a lighter and cooler red as the petal extends out of the deep warm hued centre of the flower - as it emerges into the light – where it becomes cooler.



'Josephine Bruce'
by Susan Harrison-Tustain
Watercolor on Arches 300gsm
Hot Pressed paper
Limited Edition Giclée
reproduction available

Take a look at a rose in your garden or in a vase. You will see how the buds and the main rose petals (that are in the very inner area or in shadow) are richer in hue - whereas the lighter areas that are affected by daylight, are cooler in hue because they are exposed to the cooling effect of the sky color.

To see what I mean, let's do a demo brushout of a bright red petal.

Demo Brushout:

Remember this is *just an exercise* to demonstrate the effect of warm and cool colors. So we won't be creating my usual colored underwashes.

The colors I have chosen are simply to show you how you can establish form using color temperature.

Each red flower you see in nature would be described using different combinations of reds that will help you create the beautiful hues in front of you. But for today, in this exercise, we are using the colors below:



Detail of 'Josephine Bruce'

To give the impression of the petal gently emerging into the daylight, we need to ensure we have our colors softly blending into each other. We don't want demarcation lines where each color begins and ends. That would create *judder bars* for the eye!

So I create smooth gentle transitions by laying in a wash of clear water over the petal – *before* I begin painting. This will allow the water and pigment to flow gently and blend without leaving demarcation lines.

In this instance, let's keep the warm color at the 'inner' end of the petal. We need a warm rich red such as *Scarlet Red* – as opposed to a cool *Alizarin Crimson* red which would better describe the area affected by the cool color of the sky/daylight.

While your wash is still wet, we can continue to describe and mould the petal with color temperature. So now it is time to bring in a cooler red to help us describe the portion of the petal that is emerging into the daylight. *Alizarin Crimson* is ideal for this purpose.

Naturally your pigment will be more diluted with water as we want to give the impression of daylight hitting this outer area of the petal. So let's brush in a pale/lighter area of crimson color such as *Alizarin Crimson*. Add *more* water to your *Alizarin Crimson* to create an even lighter area as the petal unfolds further into the daylight. You may like to create a soft gradation of crimson that becomes *very* fine and allows the white of the paper to become very dominant. This will give the impression of a brighter 'highlight' area.

Can you see how much cooler this area looks compared to the warmer red area where the petal is attached to the inner part of the flower?

You can see this effect on the vertical petal on the partially-open bud in my painting of Josephine Bruce.

So how do we know what is warm and what is cool?

Warm and cool is a vast subject but I have a great, simple way of teaching it:

Anything with red or yellow is basically warm. Anything with blue is basically cool. But within the red spectrum there are warmer or cooler reds. Just as there are warmer and cooler yellows within the yellow spectrum and it is the same for blue.

Take a look at a color wheel. Look at a tomato red - this is a red that is leaning towards the yellow section. This is the warmest of reds. Then compare that to a red such as Alizarin Crimson. Alizarin Crimson is leaning towards the blue section (blue being cool). So naturally if the paint makers introduce some blue into a red – then it will become a cooler red. Purples are even more cool.

You can see these 'reds' are bluer than the tomato red. So naturally Alizarin Crimson is a cooler red than a red such as Scarlet Red.

You can now understand that we have warm and cool within each colour section.

I like to think of colors in sets and subsets.

Red is a set – just as blue is a set – and so on. But within each set we have subsets. For instance I refer to what I have written above. We have warm and cool reds – we have warm and cool greens – and blues - and yellows. All colors have subsets.

So naturally you can easily determine where - within each colour subset – a color falls by deciding how warm or cool it is in relation to the other hues either side of it. Some may even fall right in the middle - not particularly warm and not particularly cool. That 'neutral temperature' color would be very close to being a 'primary' color. (more on that in another article).

That is what it is all about. It is about colors being "In relation" to what other colors are around it.

This is the same for *all* color groups:

Blue is thought of as being cold. Yes - it is cold when it is put up against red. But within the blue section there are warm and cool blues. The warm blues would be leaning toward red - such as Ultramarine. The cool blues will be furthest away from red – an example would be Phthalo Blue. So use your color wheel to help you determine where your colors are and whether they are warm or cool in relation to the colors you are using in your painting.

Let's take a look at yellow: Aureolin is a cool yellow because it has a touch of blue in it. This cools it down. Compare that yellow to Indian Yellow which has some red in it. Indian Yellow is a warm yellow. So you could create a painting that is totally yellow. There will be warm and cool passages within it if you use a variation of yellows or mixes of yellows. But the overall feeling/mood/colour temperature of the painting will be warm because you are using yellow (which gives the impression of warmth when we look at it). But you would describe your shapes and focal planes by placing warm and cool yellows

gently blending into each other if you wanted a rounded surface. Or if you want hard edges you could paint one plane warm and one cool. This would describe the different light temperatures or light one side and shadow on the other.

This is how you create form. Naturally you could also mix a tiny touch of blue or red with your yellows to alter them - but still allow the yellow colour to be dominant. This will also alter the color temperature as you would expect. Warm your Indian yellow even further by adding a tiny touch of red. Cool another yellow down by adding a tiny touch of blue. You will see what I mean when you experiment.

Generally when painting something affected by the natural light (outside or inside) - you would use warm colours to describe those shadows. Make the shadows dance with warm transparent darks and throw in a little splash of red or orange - it makes the shadow look alive.

Conversely anything that is affected by the sky (which is generally blue - or a cool color) - these things are cool. So the sunlit highlights are cool and the shadows are warm when outside or affected by natural light.

Inside can be the opposite - it also depends on the temperature of the light source. More on that in later articles.

Paint a ball using warm and cool yellows. You will see how it automatically gives you form.

Creating luminous transparent shadows:

I create shadows by first painting the *local* color of an object (which means the color of the subject before light and shadow affect it – e.g. a green leaf has a local color of green - a red petal has a *local* color of red.) Once dry, I lay in a wash of transparent color (often a mix of colors) in a subsequent wash over the top of the *local* color

Mixing your shadow colour:

The use of *transparent* colors is probably the most important component in achieving shadows that look luminous and natural. Take your *local* color – in this case we have a bright red rose – so we take transparent red such as a *Scarlet Red* - now add a **touch** of the complimentary color of red - which is green. I often use *Sap Green* (*Schmincke Sap Green mixed with Schmincke Translucent Orange will give you the most luscious Sap Green mix I have ever used*). You may like to vary your shadow color by favoring more red than green - or adding a touch of *Phthalo blue* (another beautiful transparent color) - or even a touch of a *Translucent Orange* to warm the red/green shadow mix.

Try all of these variations – you will learn so much by becoming familiar with these amazing transparent or semi transparent hues.

Variation of colors in the shadows make the shadows dance and glow like jewels.

Into a clear water wash which has been placed in the area where you see shadow - you can now float your mix of shadow colors and allow the clear water wash to gently disperse the pigment.

Once dry, you can decide if you would like to soften the edge where the shadow meets the area in highlight.

You may be interested to know I never use grey to describe shadows.

It is fun to see a rose emerge from the white paper. It is about creating something so real you could almost smell the fragrance. It is all to do with being aware of 'the traps for young players', mixing your colors and learning how to see exactly what is in front of you. Then creating the impression of *substance* rather than something simply 'painted'.

I will extend on this tutorial in future newsletters.

This is an amazing journey you are on. The most wonderful notion for an artist is to ponder the pleasure you are bringing to so many people who will enjoy your work – and think of the generations to follow who will feel that connection and emotion you felt when you were first inspired to create your paintings.

Have fun – it is contagious and it will show in your work!