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# Gouache: Basic concepts

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Dare anything and do anything with gouache. Gouache is also the easiest technique to master? once you get the hang of it!

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## 1. Making the most of opacity

Gouache consists of colored pigments, a binder (often gum arabic) and water. It produces a velvety matte finish, in powerful shades.

Because it is opaque, you can paint layer upon layer with it:

- wet on dry: adding details onto already dry paint. Each shade remains quite separate from the previous one.
- wet on wet: a color is applied over the previous one while still wet. This delicate technique requires speed and precision.

## 2. The right amount of water

It varies, depending on the rendering you want to achieve Diluting gouache allows you to approach watercolor rendering and to do washes.

A classical, moderately diluted preparation should be soft (a little like mayonnaise!): when you shake a paintbrush loaded with paint, just one drop should fall off.

You can also use pure gouache with energetic strokes and a dry paintbrush. Note: most works combine various techniques.

### 3. From background? to details

Start by doing a pencil sketch, at least to place the major masses. Paint the major background masses, then the large color blocks. Finally, add a series of details, shadows and lights, to create depth.

What you need to know: Unlike watercolors, you can lighten a shade. This is why applying dark colors first is recommended.

#### **Tip: Light or dark?**

##### *To lighten a color, add:*

- some white: take some of the original color and create a new nuance by adding a little white gouache.
- some water: the shade will lose in opacity, but become lighter? and stay the same!

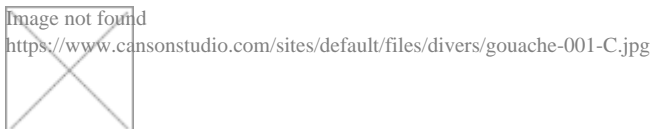
##### *Conversely, to darken a shade, add:*

- some black (or a darker color): but watch out, the result can sometimes be disappointing!
- layers in the same shade: adding more paint will make a color subtly thicker.

### 4. A few mistakes to avoid

- Avoid adding too many thick layers. These "impastos" are likely to flake and peel once dry.
- Instead of continuing to add shading and light to salvage a less than convincing volume, you'd be better off covering it with a new color block? and starting over again!
- Turn your work to observe it from various angles. Some perspective errors sometimes show up best when viewed sideways or upside down!
- Put some distance between you and your piece: by taking a step back and squinting slightly, the contrasts will stand out.

- Load your brush enough to paint your color blocks in a single sweep. For large areas, tilt your board towards you and paint a series of horizontal stripes, starting at the top.
- Do not add too much white to your colors? They will fade when dry.
- Use everything that can help you. You can draw straight lines without leaving smudges by pressing the ferrule of your paintbrush against a ruler positioned obliquely to the paper.
- It's okay to draw fine details with a pencil? instead of seeing red!



## 5. Did you say texture?

?

Opacity does not necessarily mean uniformity. Some techniques can make plants, mineral surfaces and other flowing waters look more natural than nature:

- Create ripples with a comb, spatter some droplets of paint by pulling back the bristles of a toothbrush, to liven up a foamy sea or a mass of vegetation.
- Add color with a sponge or wipe it off irregularly with a dry rag to increase its texture.
- Apply a wash to soften contrasts.

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**Gouache paints can be used at will on a wide range of supports? Gouache is easy to manage and undemanding, and only requires? a little fresh water to display its full richness!**

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### **Gouache: Preparing and maintaining your materials**

Préparer et entretenir son matériel

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**Although there is no time limit for adding a series of layers of gouache, you'll be better off giving your imagination free rein while you have all your materials available, within easy reach!**

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