

## **WATERCOLOR PAINTS: Guidelines, Tips, and FAQ Answered**

**We define watercolors as paints that use a Gum Arabic solution as the binder.** Pigments are dispersed into the binder using a muller to shear pigment particles away from each other. The better dispersed a pigment is, the better the paint will look on paper. The ratio of watercolor medium (Gum Arabic solution) to pigment depends on the pigment itself. Earth pigments like umbers need more medium, while glass and mineral pigments like azurite need less.

**Making watercolor paints is one of the best ways to learn about the individual characteristics of various pigments-** because there is little "in the way" between you and the pigment. Gum Arabic is a weak binder but that is what makes watercolor what it is- easy to pick up directly with a wet brush, and easy to re-wet after it has dried on paper.

**Some people think watercolor paints are translucent by definition, but this is a misconception.** It is simply that popular brands of watercolor focus on translucent varieties. The opacity or translucency of the pigment determines whether the paint is opaque or translucent, second to how much water is added to the paint. Some examples of opaque colors are cobalts, cadmiums, ultramarines, and iron oxides. Translucent and semi-translucent pigments include phthalos, carbon blacks, ochres, most pearlescents, fluorescents, and minerals like malachite and jade.

**\*Making watercolors from scratch is both fun and challenging because once you learns how to do it, you quickly see how to make them better each time. It is really an exercise in "trial-and-error," but luckily the results are almost always usable.**

**\*After the paints are dry, you will notice that some have cracked. This is normal, though in extreme cases it can indicate that not enough binder was added. Sometimes this means that the dried pans of paint will be difficult to wet and pick up color.**

**\*If your paints are very shrunken or fallen, it means too much water was added while mixing. As long as there is also enough binder in the recipe, this is only a cosmetic issue. For the speed of the class, we fill the pans in one go, but to make them more full and even, they can be filled in 2-3 layers that are allowed to dry gradually.**

**\*If your finished paints remain soft, sticky, or shiny after a long drying period (a week or more) it indicates that too much binder was included. These paints are still good to paint with but they will always be a little soft and delicate.**

**\*If you continue to make watercolor paints in the future, take notes on the proportion of pigment to binder you used. Keeping track of these recipes will help you to constantly improve the paints you make.**

**KREMER PIGMENTS**