

Introduction

My name is Emil Sennholz. I graduated Slippery Rock University with a degree in Art in 2012. I had of course had art lessons and been interested in art long before that as well. I'm a person of many interests, and I love to learn from a variety of fields, art just happens to be one of those fields that interest me. I did some traveling to Germany and Taiwan, learning their cultures and artistic styles before returning to the United States. Since my return, I have been working hard on my artistic endeavors, building a reputation locally and globally. I have learned many things in my search for artistic enlightenment.

While I was unsure of my path, I had several artist friends encouraging me, even going as far as giving me free canvases. These canvases were large, one was six feet by four feet, and the other was five feet by four feet. I was at first hesitant to use something so large, but after giving it a try, I found that I enjoyed it. I've been using canvases for painting anywhere between two feet by three feet, and four feet by six feet.

Using such canvas sizes makes it difficult to have proper frames. So I learned how to make my own frames, stretch the canvas, gesso them, how to do everything from start to finish when it comes to making art.

As I learned more and experimented with different media, different uses of these techniques were obvious to me. They may not be as obvious to others, and I'd like to teach you a little about these media.

In this short article, I'll be teaching you what media have what effects, so that you can decide for yourself what materials you'll need for future projects. I'll only be discussing materials used for 2D art such as drawing and painting.

There is more to art than just painting on a canvas, or drawing on some paper. There are many different kinds of materials that can be used.

Acrylic paint, oil paint, spray paint, charcoal, pencil, graphite, ink, pen, marker, pastel, and more. That doesn't even include the additives that can be used with your artwork. Glitter, sand, clay, paint thinner, gesso, charcoal powder, sawdust, flies, banana peels, the possibilities are endless.

There are even some additives that go under the paint or are mixed with paint. Gesso might be the first thing that comes to mind, but there is also painter's paste, or painter's tape to leave some areas untouched, or metallic finish for a shiny sheen. The there is the issue of using a good protectant for when you mix several media together.

Lets get started with the differences between all the liquid pigments like paint and ink. No, I'm not teaching you what the difference between paint and ink is, I'm going to teach your their different effects on different materials. Here is a list of media, and what they do:

Acrylic paint is cheap and best used on canvas. Straight from the tube, acrylic is thick making it better for large canvases, and less precise work, not to say that you can't use it for precision work. Acrylic is fast drying, depending on how thinly or thickly it is applied, it may dry in 1 hour, or 15 hours. (I like putting it on thick, and let it dry for a day and a half.

Oil paint is more expensive and best used on canvas. Straight from the tube, oil is fairly thick, but less so than acrylic, making it easier to blend and work with. Good for smaller canvases and more precision work. Oil is slow drying, depending on how thick you lay it, it could stay wet for nearly a week, or several months if properly maintained. This makes reworking easy, and nearly removes any need to hurry with the artwork.

Wall paint is fairly cheap and best used on the wall... and paper. Straight from the can, wall paint is very thin and easily manipulated for light texture, but isn't as easily blended. This paint dries very quickly, taking between 5 minutes and 30 minutes to dry depending on its thickness.

Spray paint is a fairly cheap option and best used on smooth surfaces like paper or on top of another paint. Spray paint is very thin, making it easy to cover up. Depending on the spray paint, it may be ease to blend, or nearly impossible because of how quickly it dries. Of course if it is applied thickly, it may take a long time to dry, making it nearly the same consistency of wall paint, allowing it to be worked on.

Water color is a fairly cheap paint and is best used on paper. Water colors are extremely thin, being absorbed into paper, only coloring the paper, not allowing it to be worked, or for there to be any texture. Because of overlapping capabilities, watercolors are good for detailed work. If this paint is applied thickly, it still cannot be worked because the colors will blend uncontrollably with each other. This paint if used thinly, may take around 5 minutes to dry.

Printmaking ink is a more expensive ink, but of excellent quality. It is mostly used on paper, but can also be on other materials easily because of its thickness. Printing ink is easily reworked, and however may not be good for textures because of its extremely long drying time. If applied thinly, the ink may dry in two days, and if used thickly, it may take weeks to dry, or may never fully dry as the coating dries, but the insides don't.

Drawing ink is a cheap solution for blending your drawing skills and painting skills together. It's watery much like watercolors, not making it easy to blend or rework, but fairly easy to cover up, but not with ink of a lighter color. Because the ink is absorbed into the paper, it dries fairly quickly, only taking ten or so minutes.

With all that said, these media may be used on different materials, but their effectiveness will drop tremendously. Thinner media like ink, watercolors, etc, will only stain canvas, and is difficult to make dark values with. Even with acrylic paints on paper may be difficult to control. While there is nothing wrong with trying, once the acrylic dries to the paper, it is heavier than the paper and makes the material bend easily if it doesn't have some sort of support.

Now I'll move on to explain more media, mostly used on paper. These media are more solid than liquid, and have a wide variety of applications. We'll begin with charcoal:

Charcoal sticks are a cheap way to put some dark value to a drawing. It can be applied lightly or heavily, and easily blended with either a tool or finger once on the paper. When applied to paper, it is uneven, opening opportunity to use as contrast and uneven surfaces, or to be blended for an even value. Charcoal can be very messy, or if used carefully and or with tools, it can be very detailed while still having a variety of lights and darks. Because it is used on the surface of paper, it can be reworked at any time until a protective coating is added.

Pastels can be cheap or expensive, but allow the user to add color to their drawing in much the same way charcoal is used. Because paper is uneven, the pastel makes an uneven mark which can be left unchanged, or blended. Pastels are messy, but if carefully used, or used with tools, may turn out with extreme detail. Pastels can be reworked at any time before a protective coating is added.

Charcoal powder is fairly cheap, it can be used in blots or as a coating. I have often used it as a decorative addition to my paintings, but generally charcoal powder is used in its own unique way. After applying gesso on paper and allowing it to dry, charcoal powder can be applied onto the paper. Using rubbing alcohol to turn the powder into a paste, it can be made darker with more Charcoal powder, or lighter with more rubbing alcohol. Charcoal powder can be reworked at any time, with only a little rubbing alcohol.

Drawing pencils are cheap and easy to draw with. They can be used for a variety of lines and values, and when sharp, are perfect for detailed work. Pencil can also be blended to make a flat value, and can be easily erased or reworked later until a protective coat has been added.

Graphite is like a cross between pencil and charcoal, allowing the user to be detailed, or create uneven values. It can be blended like pencil or charcoal to make an even tone, or even erased or reworked before a protective coat is applied.

Pen/Marker is cheap, and can be used for a varying thickness of lines. The ink comes out in a crisp line, good for detailed work. Once the ink is on the paper, it cannot be removed, and attempts to blend will smear the ink and make it ugly unless done just right. Once the ink has dried, no protective coating is needed.

That is pretty much all of the common media used for 2D artwork. As you work more with these media, other creative things may present themselves like finding colored paper, putting objects on top and letting it sit outside on a sunny day. The sun will fade the paper, and what was covered will remain the same color.

Learn more about the processes of artwork! Read more of my "how to" articles, or if you want personal lessons, that is an option as well! Thank you for reading! Enjoy making art!