

Learning from the Masters

Rembrandt van Rijn

Master Copy Class



Provided by

 **DRAWING AMERICA**®

Instructed by

Ben Valentine



Paints

I always try to use the best possible paints that are available, but the good news is, that doesn’t *always* mean the most expensive.

I currently use only paints bound in linseed oil or walnut oil. It’s even more ideal to use only paints bound it linseed oil since it creates the strongest paint film. Walnut oil is second strongest.

Here are the brands that are bound in linseed or walnut:

- Michael Harding
 - Gamblin
 - Old Holland
 - Williamsburg (Not the safflower line, obviously)
 - Rublev
 - M. Graham (Bound in Walnut Oil)
- *It’s absolutely not necessary to stick to these brands for this class, it’s simply an ideal for maximum permanence when painting in layers.**

Colors

For working indirectly, like we’ll be doing with the Rembrandt Copy, I use two different palettes:

First layers

Yellow Ochre
Cadmium Red or Naphthol
Burnt Sienna
Raw Umber
Van Dyck Brown
Ivory or Bone Black
Mars Black
Lead White #1 or #2 (Rublev)
Flake White (Williamsburg)

Final layers

Indian Yellow or Transparent Oxide Yellow
Transparent Oxide Red
Magenta (PV19)
Cobalt Blue or Ultramarine
Sap Green or Viridian
Lead White #1 or #2 (Rublev)
Flake White (Williamsburg)

Sadly, lead white is expensive. But I’ve done the math, and Williamsburg’s Flake White is currently the least expensive, per ounce, that is still bound in proper oil. If money is an issue, Utrecht’s Flake White is a little bit cheaper, but is Safflower based.

“Use lots of paint and don't worry, they will make more...”
- Richard Schmid



“Self Portrait at the Age of 63” 1669
(Detail)

Rublev's Lead White (#1 or #2) is among the most expensive but is *nearly irreplaceable for this technique*. Its ropey, stringy consistency is unlike any other lead white I've ever tried. This paint is how we will build up texture.

A note about Lead White

There's not doubt about it, white lead is poisonous and should be handled with care. But we don't have to be overly paranoid when using it either. Just practice safe studio practices like not eating or smoking in the studio and wash your hands periodically and when done for the day.

One major exception though. If you are pregnant or have small kids around, it would be good to err on the side of caution and avoid its use in the studio.

I can go over some titanium white alternatives which include the use of a product called **Velazquez Medium** by **Natural Pigments**. I haven't found any other flake white replacements that are very useful but Gamblin's has some potential.

Mediums

All you will need to have for the class is some stand oil and solvent, either Turpentine or Gamsol (Oderless Mineral Spirits) and Mix the solvent with the stand oil 50/50. I highly recommend velazquez medium from Rublev too

But here are some mediums I like to have around that are fun to experiment with:

Balsam Medium (Rublev)

Venetian Varnish (Rublev)

Oleogel (Rublev)

Liquin (W&N)

Brushes

I like to use softer synthetic brushes in round and filbert shapes, for the most part.

Rosemary brushes are hard to beat for quality and price.

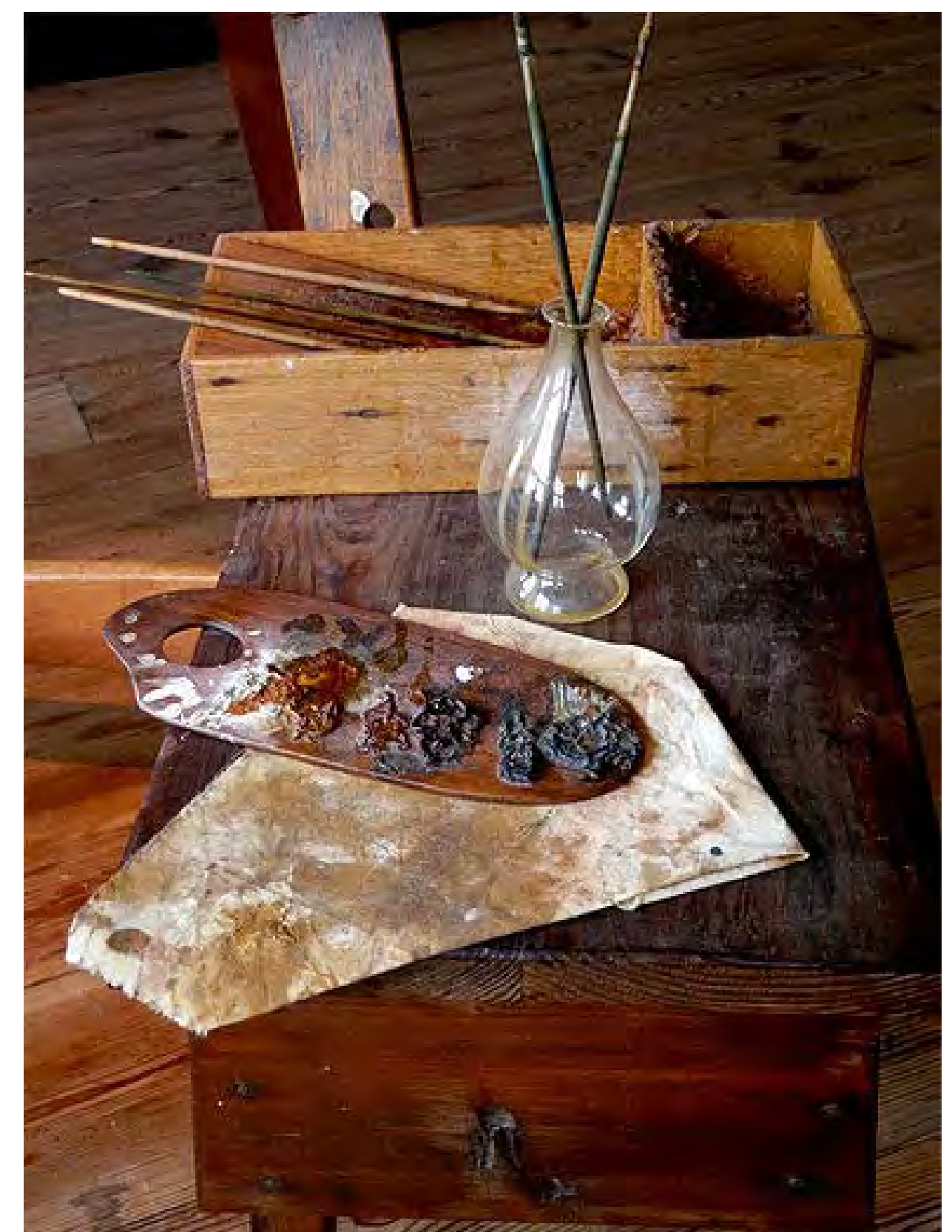
Rosemary Shiraz Series Rounds size 0,1,2,3,4

Rosemary Elcipse Long Filberts size 1,2,3,4,5

Really many soft synthic brushes will do. A few larger hog bristle brushes are useful for applying large areas of thin paint early on.

“When we speak of the perfection of art, we must recollect what the materials are with which a painter contends with nature. For the light of the sun he has but patent yellow and white lead - for the darkest shade, umber or soot.”

- John Constable



A recreation of Rembrandt's brush holder and palette.

Other good brushes are:

Rosemary Ivory, Rosemary Masters Choice, Blick University White Nylon
Filberts, Utrecht Manglon, Da Vinci Top-Acyl and Winsor & Newton
Monarch

Supports/Canvas

Rembrandt usually painted on either wood panel or linen.

I prefer to work on panel and currently work on Aluminum Composite
Material (ACM) but Masonite or MDF from the hardware store work very
well and can be made totally permanent and archival.

I apply two coats of Lead Alkyd Ground from Rublev directly to ACM panels
after a very light sanding. It's ready to paint on a day after the second coat.

You can do the same with MDF or Masonite but you'll likely need one extra
coat.

An alternative to oil ground is Acrylic Gesso. I've used Golden's Acrylic
gesso with good results and feel free to use this if you prefer. Apply three
coats and ideally wait at least three days before painting on.

If you prefer to work on canvas, it'll be important that it's a very fine texture
and not very absorbant.

Claussen's #13 is an OK alternative.

If money is not an issue, New Traditions L600 is a wonderful surface.



Artist in his Studio, ca. 1628

