DENVER art MUSEUM

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Painting:
Gouache & The History of Pigment

Ruby Red Workshop
Thursdays, 10:30 am – 12:30 pm
4-week session, February 4 – 25, 2027
Educator: Bonnie Johnson Stolzmann, Bonnie@AlleyGodsArts.com

CLASS DESCRIPTION

In this 4-week class, students will explore the rich histories of color through the hands-on medium of gouache. The class will move between the workshop and DAM collections including *European and American Art Before 1900*, *Indigenous Arts of North America, Arts of Asia*, and a visit to the Kirkland Museum to see historic pigments in actual artworks. Each session will begin with focused looking in the galleries, where the class will spend 10–15 minutes with a work that features a pigment that has shaped art and history—such as Mummy Brown, lapis lazuli (ultramarine), cochineal red, Tyrian purple, and Chinese or India ink. The class will discuss each pigment's material origins, its ecological, colonial, and global histories, and its relevance to painting traditions, while reflecting on how these stories connect to students' own cultures, identities, and practices. Students will also have opportunities to handle materials such as oak galls, linking what we see in the galleries to the raw substances from which color is made.

In the workshop, students will work with designer's gouache to translate these insights into practice. They will learn foundational techniques—such as layering, balancing opacity and transparency, mixing harmonious palettes, and controlling edges and brushwork while experimenting with palettes inspired by the pigments we encounter in the galleries. By the end of the course, students will have created a small series of gouache studies (and optionally one more resolved piece) that thoughtfully engage both technique and pigment history, developing a more intentional, critically informed approach to color and material in their own artwork.

Pricing:

Museum Friend: $130 / Member: $135 / Student: $135 / Non-Member: $160
**Students will purchase their own materials and should expect to spend $100-150.*

Refund and Class Cancellation Policy:

The Denver Art Museum adheres to a no-refund, no-exchange policy. If you are unable to attend, please consider your payment a tax-deductible donation.

If a class or workshop is cancelled by the Denver Art Museum due to inclement weather or teacher illness, a make-up day will be scheduled on a later THURSDAY as the educator's schedule allows.

Accessibility Statement:

To request large print materials, a sign language interpreter, CART or any other accessibility service, please email Access@DenverArtMuseum.org at least ten (10) business days in advance of the program. We will make every effort to provide accommodation for requests made outside of that window of time.

Please see further information about accessibility, parking, and directions to the DAM here: https://www.denverartmuseum.org/en/accessibility

Materials:

Students must purchase their own materials and bring them to each class session. The anticipated materials spend is $100-150. Additional materials will be supplied.

The DAM partners with Denver-based Meininger Art Material to create class materials kits that can be ordered online and picked up or shipped locally. Students must pre-buy the kits online via the Meininger website before picking up prior to the first day of class. Please search the *Meininger Class Kit* section on their website.

Item	Quantity	Suggested Link
Holbein Artists Gouache Set	1 set, 12 assorted colors	Holbein Artists' Gouache - Set of 12, Assorted Colors, 5 ml Tubes
Watercolor Paper, 140 lb (300 gsm) or heavier; 10″x14″ or larger	1 block or pad	Arches 140 lb Watercolor Block, Cold-Pressed
Paint brushes – Medium Round, Large Round, Flat Brush, sizes 8 or above	1 each	Umbria Synthetic Blend Acrylic & Gouache Brushes

Speedball Super Black India Ink	1 bottle, 2 oz.	Super Black India Ink
Drafting Tape	1 roll, ½" – 2" wide	Art Alternatives Drafting Tape
Palette, Plate, or Tray	1	Sta-Wet Professional Palette, 12"x16"
Paint Brush Water Cups	2	Collapsible Water Cup Or up to you
Rags, Towels, etc.	A few	Up to you – will be used for wiping brushes and hands.
Face Tissues	1 box or a few	Up to you – will be used for lifting pigment. The workshop has a small amount.
Items for drawing & notetaking: pencil, eraser, sketchbook or notebook	1 of each	Up to you
Optional: Genuine traditional Lapis Lazuli Gouache	1 tube	De Mairo Genuine Lapis Lazuli Gouache
Optional: Drawing board or support – you will not need this if you are using a watercolor paper block	1	Foam Board

What to Expect:

During class time, students can expect a balance of gallery visits, brief contextual presentations, and hands-on studio work. Each session will begin in the galleries as a group, looking closely at one or two artworks that feature a historically significant pigment. We'll discuss how those colors were made, their cultural and political histories, and how the artists used them in composition and meaning.

In the workshop, students will experiment with designer's gouache that is, or closely mimics, the pigment highlighted that day. Learning will be focused on techniques that immerse students in different ways of handling gouache—such as layering, glazing, scumbling, working from dark to light vs. light to dark, drybrush and wet-into-wet approaches, and building confident, decisive marks. Rather than centering a single final painting, students will be acquiring "tools for their creative tool chest" through a series of small studies, experiments, and short exercises. No prior technical knowledge or gouache experience is required; all levels are welcome. The only rule in this class is kindness to oneself and to each

other. The instructor encourages play, curiosity, and interaction. We will regularly share work in progress through kind and constructive critiques, both of one's own work and classmates' work. This creates a sense of community and allows us to grow more than if we were to practice alone. Day-to-day, students can expect: group gallery looking, short demos, guided prompts, generous studio time, and supportive, collaborative conversation around process and discovery.

Students will experiment with designer's gouache that is, or closely mimics, the pigment highlighted that day. Through guided exercises, they will translate their research, reflections, and visual observations into original works on paper. By the end of the course, students will have deepened their understanding of pigment histories, sharpened their skills with gouache, and developed a more intentional, critically informed approach to color and material in their own artwork.

Timeline:

Week 1 – Cochineal, Story, and Indigenous Reds

Indigenous Arts of North America collection

- Welcome and introductions; establish a simple class agreement that centers kindness—to oneself and to others—and encourages play, curiosity, and experimentation over perfection.
- Visit the *Indigenous Arts of North America* galleries to spend time with Tom Haukaas's *Creation Story* (1998–99), which includes gouache. We look at this work in part because it uses the same type of paint we'll be using in the studio.
- A brief introduction to the historic red pigment cochineal.
- Studio time focused on exploratory exercises with gouache, using a red-leaning palette and getting comfortable with mixing, water control, and opacity.
- Students create a series of small, loose studies inspired by what they noticed in the gallery (for example, color, rhythm, pattern, or line), with an emphasis on experimentation and building a "creative tool kit" rather than finishing a single polished piece.
- Group sharing: each student shows one or more studies and participates in kind, constructive feedback so that everyone learns from one another and a sense of community develops.

Week 2 – Ultramarine, Devotion, and Sacred Blue

European and American Art Before 1900 collection

- Brief check-in; reminder of our class agreement centering kindness, play, and experimentation.

- Visit the *European and American Art Before 1900* galleries to spend time with *Francesco di Antonio di Bartolomeo, Madonna and Child with a Swallow.*
- Focus on ultramarine made from lapis lazuli and its historic importance as a rare, highly valued and controlled pigment.
- Studio work with a blue-forward gouache palette, exploring mixing, value shifts, and layering to create different qualities of blue.
- Students make several small, loose studies based on what they noticed about blue in the painting—how it shapes space, emphasis, or feeling.
- Group sharing: each student shows one or more studies and offers/receives kind, constructive feedback, continuing to build a supportive learning community.

Week 3 – Purples, Industry, and Our Place in the Timeline
Kirkland Museum

- Brief check-in and reminder of our shared focus on kindness, play, and experimentation.
- Extended visit to the Kirkland galleries to look at several of Vance Kirkland's paintings, paying close attention to his use of saturated color, especially purples.
- Discussion of Tyrian purple and its origins, then a broader look at purple pigments over time, leading into mauveine, the first synthetic dye developed by William Henry Perkin in 1856 as an industrial byproduct.
- Conversation about the links between industry, art materials, and climate change, and how these histories intersect with who we are as artists and where we locate ourselves in a larger historical timeline.
- In the studio, demonstration of an India Ink gouache resist process that students will use for a more sustained painting.
- Students begin a longer-term piece that draws on ideas from the day—purples, material histories, industry, and personal perspective. This painting will be completed and then used for an India ink–gouache resist in the final class.

Week 4 – Ink, Oak Galls, and Gouache Resist
Arts of Asia galleries + final project and reflection

- Brief check-in, then a short visit to the *Arts of Asia* galleries to look at works that use ink, paying attention to line, brushwork, and the role of empty space.
- Return to the studio to see and handle oak galls and talk about their historical use as one source for making ink.

- Students complete their gouache resist paintings (at least 12" × 16") using India ink over the gouache pieces begun in Week 3, then reveal the final images.
- Group critique of the finished works and conversation about the class as a whole—how thinking about pigment histories, industry, and ecology may have shifted or deepened each person's practice.
- Wrap-up with a set of resources for further learning, reading, and continued exploration in gouache, pigment history, and related topics.

Educator:

Bonnie Johnson Stolzmann is a Denver-based fine artist, illustrator, and social activist whose award-winning work has been exhibited nationally and internationally in juried exhibitions, galleries, and museums. Her scientific illustrations have been published through collaborations with the Max Planck Institute for Chemical Ecology, Harvard University, the University of California, and the Jepson Herbarium. Bonnie served on the Exhibitions Board of the Colorado Women's Art Museum and is a member of the Colorado Women's Art Museum, the Women's Caucus for Art, and Spark Gallery. She is an invited lecturer, demonstrator, and juror for organizations including Harvard, University of California Berkeley's Jepson Herbarium, and the Gateway to the Rockies Show. Her community leadership includes founding clothing exchanges and food banks at Title I schools and expanding arts access through Denver Public Schools and the Cherry Creek Arts Festival Student Art Buying Program.

https://www.alleygodsarts.com/

WORKSHOP SPACE POLICIES

About:

The Ruby Red Workshop is a dedicated space for Creative Classes and adult programs located on the first floor of the DAM's Martin Building. Students can expect a traditional style art workshop with tables and four-legged chairs with backrests. There are a variety of other seating options available. Sinks, soaps, paper towels, and waste receptacles are accessible in the workshop. Restrooms are located in the elevator bay just outside the workshop entrance. Food and beverages are allowed inside the workshop space, please ensure that you do not enter any galleries with these items.

Each class is different and does not follow a strict or set structure, but will generally include instructor presentations and demonstrations, class gallery visits to view artworks in the DAM collections, individual work time supported by class

instructor and assistant, and discussion or share-out time of finished works and works-in-progress.

Cleanup:

Please remove all artworks from the classroom at the end of each class. If wet paintings or in-progress artworks need to be stored in the classroom, there is limited storage on drying racks and in the equipment closet. Students must take home their own materials after each class. Please ensure that art supplies and equipment belonging to the DAM are put back in the appropriate locations. Sponges, paper towels, and cleaning solution are provided in the classroom for cleanup.

Classroom Access:

Students will have access to the classroom only during scheduled class hours. Please contact Mia DeBakker, Creative & Public Engagement Coordinator, if you need to arrange entrance to the Workshop outside of those hours – mdebakker@denverartmuseum.org.

QUESTIONS

Questions about class content, curriculum, materials, etc. can be directed to Mia DeBakker at mdebakker@denverartmuseum.org or Sarah Rockett at srockett@denverartmuseum.org.

For any questions concerning your registration, please reach out to our Sales & Service Team at info@denverartmuseum.org or (720) 913-0130.

Thank you for being part of Creative Classes at the DAM!