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MATISSE DRY MEDIUMS



by Wendy Shortland

Matisse Dry Mediums are particularly suited to the angular shapes of cubist painting. In my painting "Breakfast Coffee" I began with black and white thumbnail sketches in my visual diary. When I had found a composition that pleased me, I did another thumbnail sketch with coloured pencils. I proceeded in the same way for the painting "Bread and Wine".



Painting in the Cubism Style

Start by breaking down the image into basic geometric shapes. Use every perspective, not just the front of the object. Break up the plane of your image. Make geometric shapes in the background by continuing some of the lines of the main objects out to the edge of the painting.

Cubists often used greys, browns and blues. Look at Cubist paintings, particularly the work of Braque and Picasso. Use a limited palette of colours. I did use a bit of artistic licence and made the blue a little brighter in the coffee painting, and introduced a muted red and green into the bread and wine painting. On the whole though, I painted with siennas, umbers and greys.

Some good examples to look at would be:

Pablo Picasso, *Woman Playing the Mandolin* (1909)

Pablo Picasso, *The Guitar Player* (1910)

Georges Braque, *Homage to J. S. Bach* (1912).

Georges Braque, *Road near L'Estaque* (1908)

Georges Braque, *Still Life with Violin* (1914)

Materials

Various Matisse Dry Mediums, Matisse Matt Gel Medium (MM30), Matisse Spreader Medium (MM8).

Coffee painting: Matisse "Structure" acrylic paint: *Yellow Oxide*, *Antique White*, *Cerulean Blue*, *Graphite Grey*, *Raw Sienna*, *Burnt Sienna*, *Mars Black*, *Raw Umber*.

Wine painting: Matisse "Structure" acrylic paint: *Yellow Oxide*, *Antique White*, *Antique Green*, *Burgundy*, *Graphite Grey*, *Raw Sienna*, *Burnt Sienna*, *Mars Black*, *Raw Umber*, *Burnt Umber*.



Collage newspaper or magazine text of your own choice.

Preparing Your Canvas

I decided to have the morning paper with my coffee, so I tore strips from the *Sydney Morning Herald* and collaged it to my canvas with Matisse Matt Gel Medium (MM30). Match your collage to your image: for example, if you decided to paint a musical instrument you could collage sheet music onto the painting. For the bread and wine-themed painting, I tore fragments from *La Fiamma*, Sydney's Italian newspaper. Be sure to take the collage right around the edges of your canvas.

Next, I mixed a very small amount of Matisse "Structure" *Yellow Oxide* paint with a sufficient amount of Matt Gel Medium to cover my canvas. I then added a very small amount of water, just enough to ensure that the mixture wet the newsprint. This combined the underpainting step with saturating the newsprint in Matt Gel Medium to strengthen it. If you want to see the text of your collaged paper, then you'll need to use little enough paint in the mix that it's still transparent. If you don't wish to collage, then underpaint thinly with the colour of your choice. Either *Yellow Oxide* or *Raw Sienna* is a good choice.

Once the background was thoroughly dry, I drew my image onto the canvas with a very thick and soft pencil. Don't worry if your drawing isn't perfect the first time. Some extra lines will add interest.

Applying the Texture

The Matisse Dry Mediums I used on the main objects (coffee pot, cup and saucer, wine glass, wine flask, and bread), were the various grades of *Lang Lang Sand*, *Pumice*, *Calcined Bauxite*, or *Mica Flakes* for the different panels. For the wine and the coffee I used some *Microspheres*, as they are smoother and allow the beverage to sit inside the more heavily textured container. I used a small palette knife to keep each medium to its own angular shape.

For the background I used *Microspheres* for some panels and *Wollastonite* for others. These particular dry mediums were chosen for their relative transparency, as I wanted some of the text on the newsprint to remain showing when the painting was complete. Each background panel was dragged out to the edge of the painting from main objects, following the lines of a more heavily textured panel there. The dry mediums were left for several days to dry, then the main objects were underpainted with the same colour as the background in a washy mixture to ensure it went into all the crevices.



Painting the Still Life Items

In each shape I painted a light-to-dark gradient, mostly putting light against dark, dark against light, where it came up against an adjoining panel. For example, in a grey panel, I would make a gradient from 100% *Graphite Grey* to a mix of *Graphite Grey* and *Antique White*. Once every area of the painting was covered (including the background), where necessary I exaggerated the contrast by dry-brushing colour along the top of the texture. On the grey panels, I would perhaps dry-brush some *Antique White* onto the light side and some *Mars Black* on the dark side where I felt additional contrast was necessary. The dry-brushing enhances the texture.

Painting the background

For each of the background panels, I used neutral colours mixed with Spreader Medium, to add transparency to the paint and allow text to show through. Then, in some places I very lightly dry-brushed some *Antique White* on, to enhance the

subtle texture of the background.

Finishing Off

Every individual painting will be different, however you should consider if some of the colours from one part of your painting need carrying through to another area. In the wine painting I carried some red and some green onto other areas.

Below are the two finished paintings: *Bread and Wine* (top) and *Morning Coffee* (bottom).

