

Workshop: Introduction to Acrylic Painting on Wood

Presentation,
Group Contributions,
Group Q&A / Discussion

Ed Kerns, April 20, 2023
Montgomery County Carvers Club

Overview

The goal of this program is to discuss **introductory concepts** in acrylic painting of wood carvings. In addition to the basic presentation, we can 'group source' the best ideas by **group participation**. Club participants are asked to add their own insights and questions. The session will overview basics of **supplies, surface preparation, paint preparation, painting techniques, overcoating, hints, fine touches and color basics**. Questions and general group discussion is greatly encouraged. All club participants are encouraged to bring their own carvings that illustrate **questions** or problems they are having with painting, or to illustrate elements of painting they are experienced with to **share with the group**.

Why Paint With Acrylics?

- Add interest to the carved shape
- Human eye “likes” color
- Woods with little grain especially benefit
- Woods with strong grain may be better with an oil or lacquer finish

Supplies

- Paints – bottles or set – get a range of colors (craft store, Amazon)
- Brushes
- Palette – mixing and diluting paints
- Covered Mixing containers – “pots”
- Towels/rags - to wipe a mistake, your clothes, or the bench
- Bench covering – newspaper, plastic sheet
- Water or medium - dilution
- Optional: apron



Plan Ahead

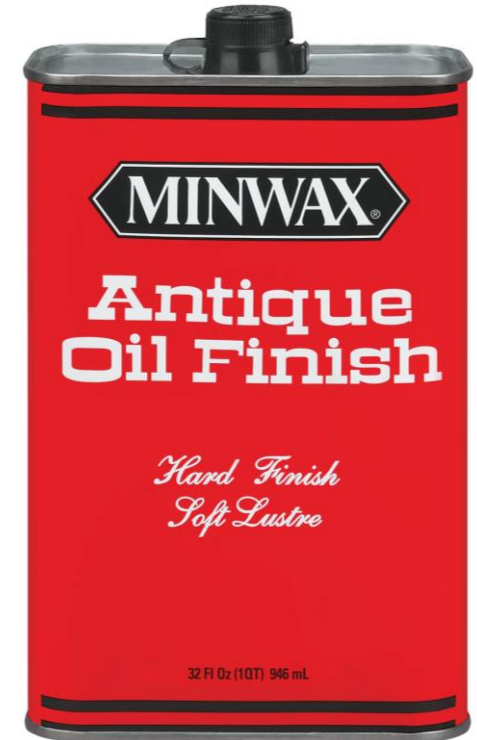
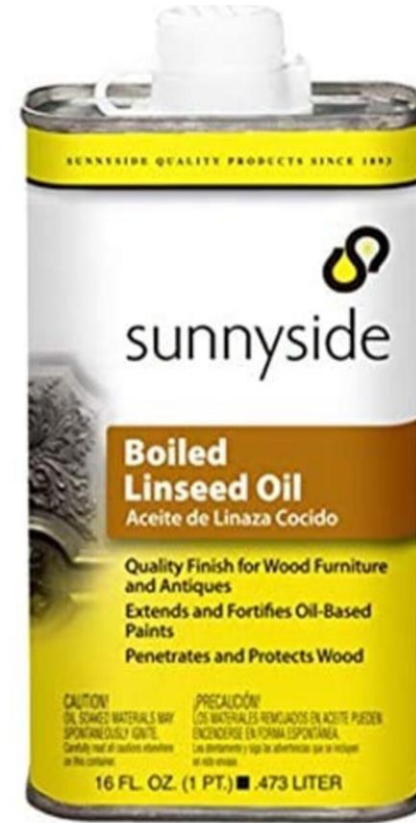
- Select colors
- Plan surface preparation, painting, overcoating
- Test on a scrap of the same wood

Surface Preparation of Carving - I

- Complete the carving before painting
- Raw wood (may need multiple paint coats - end grain higher uptake)
 - Carved facets – carved area has paint density variations
 - Burnished area (absorbs less paint)
 - Exposed periphery (absorbs/holds more paint)
 - Paint can pool in center of cut
 - Sanding
 - Evens out the color density
 - Sanded surface absorbs more paint
 - If sanded with larger grit: absorbs more paint
 - Test on same wood surface

Surface Preparation of Carving - II

- Undercoating pretreatment
 - Purpose: homogeneous paint coating - dry before painting (except as noted) – “Coat #1”
 - No pretreatment – bare wood
 - Shellac (in ethanol)
 - Acrylic Paint
 - Spray – Matte, clear, light coat (not all sprays are acrylic)
 - Brush – same color or clear
 - Minwax “Natural” stain (#209) – leaves a flesh color on unpainted wood
 - Boiled linseed oil (may contain a drop of raw umber oil paint) – leaves flesh color on unpainted wood
 - “Antique oil” - diluted with paint thinner (e.g. 1:4) – leaves flesh color
 - Gesso
 - Terra Nova NaturOil – paint after 15 min.
 - Water with Dawn (spray, brush, toothbrush, blot off) - paint immediately



Paint Preparation

- Mixing with water
 - 1 water : 1 paint - thick - “opaque”
 - 10 water : 1 paint – thin (may allow grain to show through) – “folk look”
- Mix with acrylic medium (e.g., Liquitex Professional Effects Airbrush Medium)
 - Improved adhesion
- Mixing with other paints to get desired color
 - Challenging – not intuitive – color wheel
- Mix thoroughly, “mash the blobs” – avoid blobs, or else uneven
- Try on a “waste” piece of the same wood, not on your carving
- Color may differ when dry
- Color may be affected by underlying wood, unless painting opaque

Painting

- One color section at a time and let dry – avoids smearing
- Mostly dry in ½ hour; harder with overnight drying
- Keep notes or journal of colors used (later reference for more coats or to use on a different carving, note the mixing ratio)
- Think Bob Ross: “That’s OK”, “Happy Accident”, “Can always paint over it later”, “Take your time”, “Enjoy”
- Multiple smooth strokes to smooth out the paint – may smooth better as it dries or soaks in over a couple minutes; brush it until smooth but not so it leaves streaks

Notes - I

- End grain effects – greater with more dilute paint; blotchiness
- Paint sideways along edges to stay within the section
- When mixing colors, mix thoroughly, or will get color spots from blobs
- Correcting mistakes
 - Wipe off with wet towel, if done immediately
 - Let dry and carve off
 - Overpaint
 - Spread out “blobs” on surface using a brush

Notes - II

- If too light – coat again with the same color
- Mixing in a covered container can preserve the paint for later use
- As it dries, it will often even out and change
- Solid color vs. variegated (multiple colors dabbed on)
- Crisp edges vs. diffuse / blended edges between color patches

**Solid
Colors**

**Sharp
Edges**

**Variegated
Colors**

**Diffuse
Edges**



Painting Experiments – My Conclusions on Good Practices

- Opaque Look: 2 Coats of 1:1 dilution
- Folk Art Look:
 - Coat 1 – Sealer Applied Lightly
 - Antique Oil 1:4 diluted in mineral spirits
 - Minwax Natural stain
 - Boiled linseed oil
 - Acrylic matte spray light or shellac
 - Water (wiped off)
 - Let Dry (except water)
 - Coat 2
 - 1:1 acrylic paint diluted in water or dilution medium

Overcoating

- To protect from rubbing or abrasion
- Clear acrylic spray paint (matte, semi-gloss, gloss)
- Some sources recommend the following. Test them first!
 - Wax (e.g., Howards Feed-N-Wax) – also changes feel (Doug Linker)
 - Be careful with wax (e.g., Briwax) - solvent attacks the acrylic (Dall Hall)
 - Test overcoat material before using on your precious work
 - Meltonian shoe polish-natural
 - Lacquer / Varnish

More Notes

- Can overpaint with a different color (low dilution) if you don't like how it looks
- Overcoating with a thin coat changes the color
- Make it crisp and clear
 - Use fine brush to make sharp edges & get in corners
 - Add paint where color is blotchy
 - Use carving tool to trim off overpaints
- Color often changes as it dries
- Test undercoat, paint, or overcoat on a scrap of the same wood

Fine Touches

- **“Folk Art” Look**

- Thinned/diluted acrylic paint; lightly painted; soaked in; watercolor-like effect
- Surface wash; “stain” effect
- Softer look
- Allows grain to come through
- Thin paint is blotchy and streaky when first paint is applied; keep brushing; blot paint off brush; as it soaks in and dries it will smooth out

- **Blush Cheeks**

- Thin light red on cheeks, nose tip, ear tips – blush of color

- **Shadows**

- Shades of gray or diluted black
- In the corners or crevices that would be in shadow; folds of hair
- Adds dimensionality

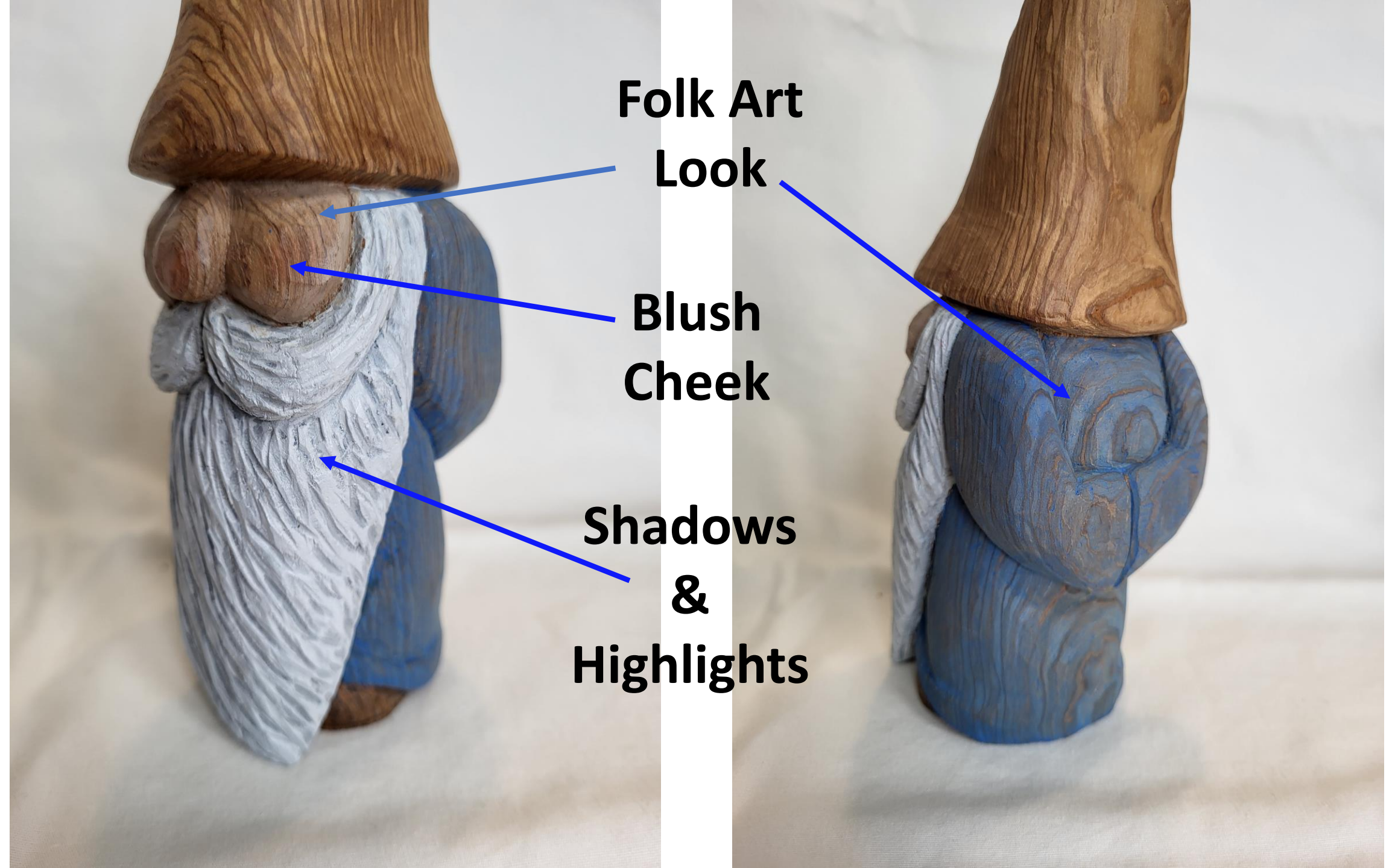
- **Highlights**

- Touch the high points sideways with a lighter color
- Where the light hits the tops of undulations

**Folk Art
Look**

**Blush
Cheek**

**Shadows
&
Highlights**



Fine Touches

- **Add Pop**
 - Increase interest by painting selected parts
 - Leave other parts unpainted
- **Dry Brushing**
 - Highlights

**Add “Pop”
With Painted
Highlights**



Dry Brush Highlights



Fine Touches

- **Antiquing**

- Cover with a dark paint (e.g., burnt umber), stain, or antiquing medium
- Then, before dry, wipe with rag or paper towel
- Leave some dark paint in the crevices; blend out with dry brush if too dark
- Slightly darkens the entire surface
- Leaves protruding surfaces clearer or shinier
- Accents the deeper carving crevices

- **Detail**

- Lines – draw in
 - Thin point permanent pen
 - Wood burner
- Dots – additional detail or pop
 - Use stylus or end of paint brush handle
- White dot on eyes



Antiquing



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6R1NW5Gj4o&t=119s>

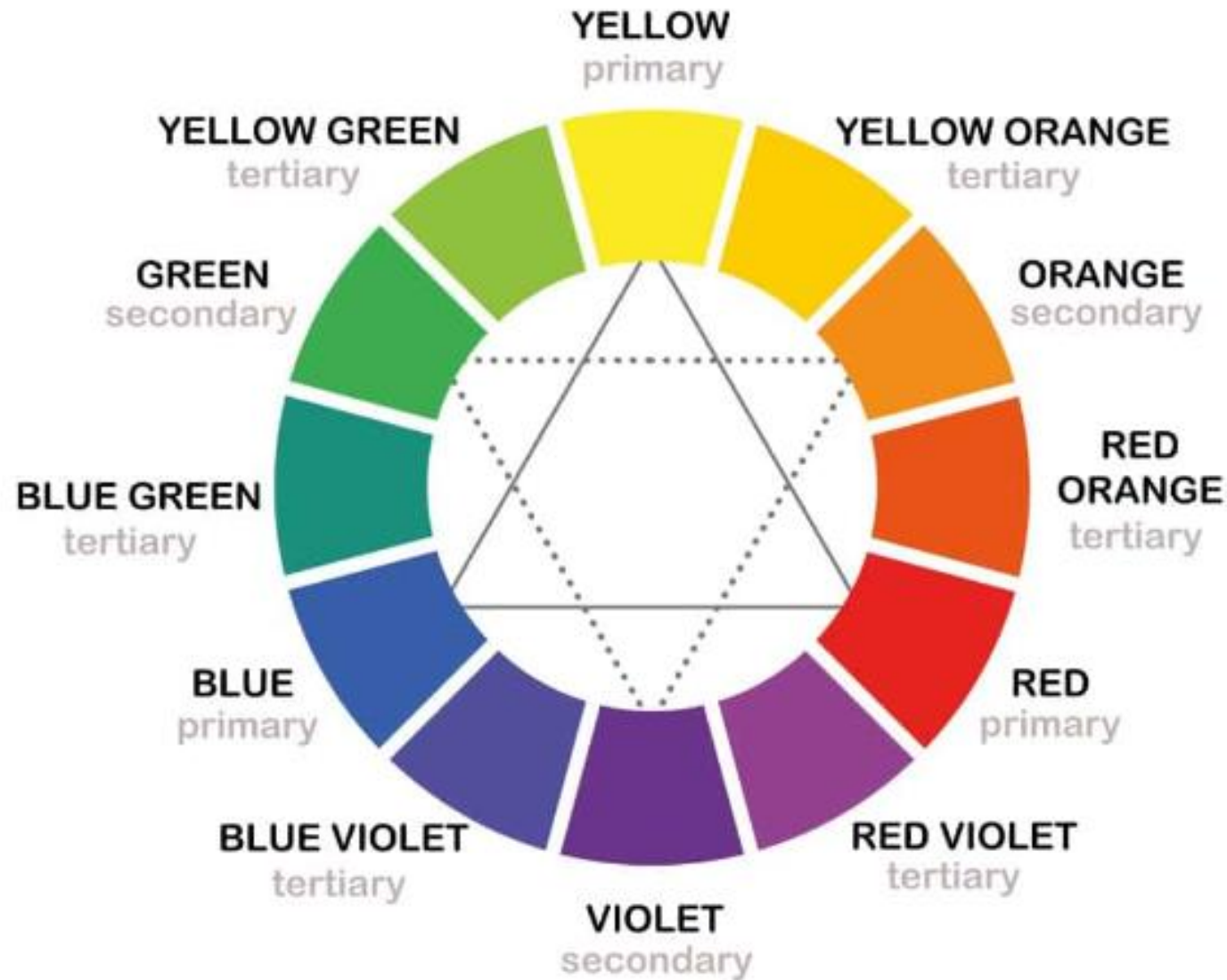


Dots



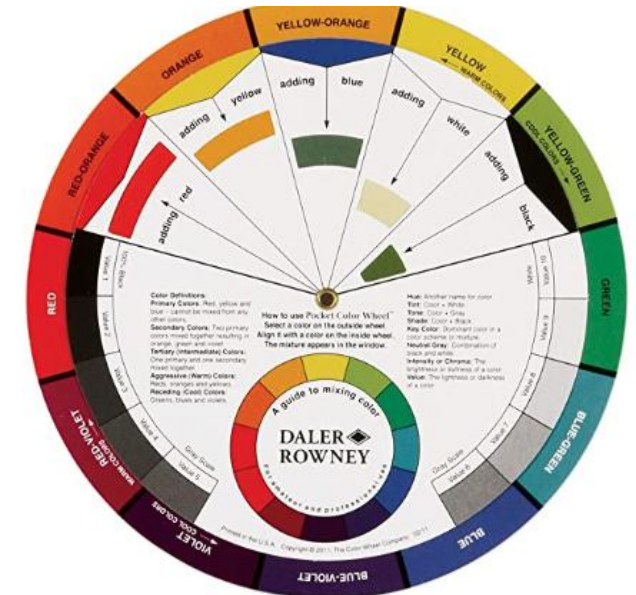
**White Dot
on Eye**

Color Wheel



Color

- Primary colors – red, green, yellow
- Secondary colors – mixing two primary colors
- Tertiary colors – mixing secondary colors, less bright and distinct than primary and secondary colors
- Color Wheel of Cox – find what colors to mix to get the desired color
- White – increases brightness
- Mixing all three primary colors gives black



Take It Up a Notch

- Color selection
- How multiple colors look side by side
- Combination with other woodworking techniques (e.g., wood burning, turning)
- Advanced painting techniques (e.g., air brushing)
- Painting methods and styles used on other media

For Further Study

Much more: Search on “Painting Wood Carvings”

- **How to Paint/Finish Your Woodcarvings** – Doug Linker
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u_Ol3bZII_8
- **Paint Your Carvings! -Tips and Tricks While Painting the Hobo Pumpkin** – Doug Linker
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qKUsw4bUam8>
- **How to Layer Paint and Dry Brush Your Woodcarvings** – Doug Linker
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CtLi1Ay2fZs>
- **How to Paint and Finish the Little Man Woodcarving** – Doug Linker
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2VasB0OQbzE&t=245s>
- **Super Simple Ways to Paint your Woodcarvings** - Blake Lunsford
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z-ZxsQNvaJs>
- **How to Paint & Antique a Wood Carving** – Cousin Jack Carves
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KQGPYuOkHIE>
- **HOW TO DO ANTIQUING ON A WOODCARVING** – carverswoodshop
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W6R1NW5Gj4o&t=119s>