

PRODUCT SPOTLIGHT

Lascaux Resonance Gouache



James Willis enjoys a unique sensory experience as he puts these paints through their paces

In February 2008, Lascaux, one of the world's leading manufacturers of water-based artists' colours, relaunched Resonance Gouache. The smooth consistency, vibrant colour range, long storage life and unique sensory qualities of this paint, makes the Resonance painting experience a delight and allows the artist complete trust in its coverage and behaviour. All 28 colours, including metallic silver and gold, are rich, vibrant, stimulating to use and provide an excellent range of hues and tones when mixed.

'Bioinformation'

These paints have been developed to incorporate 'bioinformation'. This basically means that highly structured frequency waves or 'resonance patterns', that are in sympathy

with our natural energy fields, have been developed and used in the making of this range.

The first thing you notice about Lascaux Resonance Gouache is the brilliant colour of the paint in its opaque plastic pots. Unlike tubes, the pots allow you to see the real colour, even though it is slightly desaturated by the plastic container. Once opened, the intense pigmentation becomes even more apparent and the jewel-like colours are seen to their full effect. At the same time a pleasant and delicate scent is released, which is a surprise. I read later this has been developed by Lascaux to have a 'harmonic' effect on the painter and his or her working environment. As I continued to paint I acknowledged that this was a pleasant change from solvents, lumpy paint and an ordinary chemical smell.

Covering properties

In the first painting, a market scene in Cannaregio (left), I was looking to explore the covering properties of the Resonance Gouache. Unlike watercolour, gouache is not transparent, and lights and darks can be laid one on top of each other. The Lascaux range proved that its formula gives excellent coverage and a comfortable, smooth consistency with consistent pigmentation that does not thin out when diluted with water. These paints have a gel-like quality which means that, unlike some other brands of gouache, they do not dry unevenly or too quickly. As a result application is easy and stress-free.

I began the piece by mixing a range of darks to lay out my design. Unexpectedly, some colours seem to lighten the mixtures rather than darken them, implying a higher chalk or white pigment content but, after a few trial mixtures, I was pleased with the colours and their combinations. It did remind me that it is important to get to know your palette and how each mixture behaves; this step is often missed when enthusiastically starting a new painting. A range of low-key mid-tones were then made and used over the darks. The coverage was perfect and the evenness of the paint made the whole process easy.

My palette did not contain black or burnt umber, although both colours are available in the Resonance range, so the real darks were made from ultramarine blue, carmine, violet and yellow ochre. This limited range did force me to think carefully about colour harmony, which in the end was made easier because these paints are made to work well with each other.

Layers

Building up the painting in layers meant lights had to be laid over darks and vice versa. I did not experience any difficulties here and the full pigmentation of the colours and the density of the lights gave a smooth consistent layering to the piece, which dried to an even matt finish. In the painting the individual colours have been used in mixtures and singly in order to explore their cumulative effect. The eight colours of my palette, ultramarine blue,

Cannaregio Market, Lascaux Resonance Gouache, 15×20in (38×51cm)



Courtyard, Lascaux
Resonance Gouache,
14×11in (35.5×28cm)

Landscape, Lascaux Resonance
Gouache, 13×11in (33×28cm)



turquoise blue, lemon yellow, golden yellow, yellow ochre, carmine and white, all mixed well and were easily diluted with water. At each stage of the painting the layers were allowed to dry so that I could discover how stable each layer would be when successive layers were added. Lascaux claim that the Resonance Gouache range dries to a water-resistant surface and the layering method used here bears this out.

Wet-in-wet

In order to explore other properties of this gouache the second painting *Landscape* (above), was done with a wet-in-wet technique, so that a more dilute consistency could be tried. Three greens were made from ultramarine blue, turquoise blue, lemon yellow, golden yellow and white. The first layer, applied to soaked watercolour paper, comprised loose washes of three

different greens that were allowed to run into each other. They made a satisfactory marbled effect, with the main contrasts provided by the variation in the colours – one luminous and bright, one softer and less strident and the last richer and darker. These three areas of colour provided the starting point of my tree study. Working a second wet-in-wet layer on top allowed further variations and marblings of green to cover part of the first dry layer without interrupting the painting surface.

Using a new medium for the first time takes patience and experimentation. Gouache behaves in ways that are subtly different to oil and watercolour. Its covering power when building layers is similar to oil but when using water, such as working with wet-in-wet washes, its qualities and delicacy are akin to watercolour. The joy of

Lascaux Resonance Gouache is that these attributes are enhanced by its special formula. One of the results is that the artist does not have to struggle too much with muddying colours and inconsistent behaviour.

Colour intensity

The resonance that Lascaux consistently extols as a principal feature of this range suggests a special property in their paints. The third painting *Courtyard* (above), is an attempt to show the way these colours relate to each other. Here, pure colours and their complementary mixtures have been placed in juxtaposition to demonstrate the brilliance and purity of the Lascaux pigments. For example, the turquoise blue of the sky (lightened with white) has been placed against a bright mixed orange. Both colours vibrate with an intensity that is offset by the shadow colour of

the orange and ultramarine blue mixture. Similarly the purple of the shadows, ochre of the courtyard and yellows of the subsidiary buildings relate to each other, allowing their special resonant qualities to come to the fore.

Lascaux Resonance Gouache is a pleasure to work with; the active properties in this paint are purported to open opportunities for artists to extend and express their ideas. The high quality of the paint is certainly evident. Lascaux has been established for 40 years, its products are environmentally safe and there is a worldwide customer service department to help you with your questions. □

Lascaux Resonance Gouache comes in 50ml, 250ml and 500ml jars and is available from Great Art mail order, telephone 0845 601 5772; www.greatart.co.uk. Prices start from around £3.30.