

5. Basic Painting with a Paintbrush

In order to obtain a perfect gradation of light and shadow, it is necessary to first apply a homogeneous base layer covering all surfaces, without rims or merged layers. Wait until the first coat is fully dry before applying the next one. To this base colour, I add a minimum quantity of another lighter shade, making a new mixture to be applied over the previous one, using a bit more water to create a slightly transparent brushstroke. This second mixture, which I call "highlights," must not fully cover the base colour, in consideration of areas of halftone and shadows.

If I add a darker colour to the base colour, I call such mixture "shadows," which is applied with a bit more water to the areas opposite of the highlights.

Another important aspect to keep in mind when painting a miniature is the lighting scheme we are going to follow.

For many years, the concept of zenith (overhead) light has been commonly used by the majority of professional and amateur painters. This type of lighting comes directly from above. To better understand this concept and learn where highlights and shadows must be placed, simply put the figure under a reading lamp to see where such points are marked, including the intermediate areas of light and shadow.



5.1.1. Painting Eyes (54mm)

One of the first steps in the miniature painting process is the eyes. They will provide expression to the figure, a good reason to pay very close attention this part of the process before moving forward with the rest.

If the figure is primed in a medium grey tone, the first step will be to apply a white base to the whole eyeball. In our case, since the figure is primed in white, this will not be necessary, so I proceed directly to outlining the upper and lower parts of the eyelids. For this task, I use a paintbrush # 0 with a mixture of dark leather brown XNAC-49 + medium airbrush XNAC-60



Put paint and medium in different bowls.



Add water to the paint and one or two paintbrush loads of medium to the mixture, then mix.

(40%) + water. The reason for mixing the colour with the medium is to delay the drying of the paint on the tip of the paintbrush, thus making it easier to accomplish the brushstrokes we are executing. If the outlining exceeds the established margins, I retouch with a little white paint before painting the iris.

To paint the eye's iris, I follow the same procedure used in outlining: I mix the chosen colour with the medium, then slightly press the tip of the paintbrush to concentrate the paint at one point, repeating this action if necessary to obtain the proper shape and size desired.



Once the paint load on the paintbrush has been adjusted, I outline the upper eyelid with a thin line.



In this case, I use another colour for the iris, also mixed with medium, in order to make painting easier.

5.1.2. Painting Eyes (90mm)

In bigger scales, further detail can be added by painting the pupils and a small area of reflection in each eye for more realism. Follow the same procedure mentioned previously, but after the iris has been painted, I make a mixture with a brighter colour and focus this tone in the centre without covering the edges, thus achieving a subtle gradient. For instance, I paint the pupils with matt black XNAC-02 + medium to create a dimensional illusion.



Outline of the upper eyelids.

Base colour for the iris of the eyes - XNAC-17 Napoleon blue.



Lighten the centre of the iris by adding XNAC-01 matt white to the base colour.

Paint the pupil with matt black.

5.2.2. Painting Faces and Beards (90mm)

Larger sized faces are treated much the same as those of a smaller scale; the main difference is the larger size of the paintbrush (KS-2) in order to cover a wider surface with each brushstroke.

For the face of El Cid, I begin with base colour, # 1. One of the main advantages of acrylic paints is that we are able to paint two adjacent elements in different colours without the risk of mixing the colours. In this case, for the beard's base colour, I used XNAC-49 dark leather brown.

As I lighten the face, I also lighten the beard, which allows us to consider the evolution of both elements in parallel.

Guide of Used Colors and Mixes (ACS-01)

Skin		Beard	
ACS-01 N°1	Base	XNAC 49	Base
ACS-01 N°3	1st Highlight	XNAC 46 + XNAC 49	1st Highlight
ACS-01 N°3 + ACS-01 N°4	2nd Highlight	XNAC 49	2nd Highlight
ACS-01 N°4	3rd Highlight	XNAC 46 + XNAC 52	3rd Highlight
ACS-01 N°1 + ACS-01 N°5	1st Shadow	XNAC 49 + XNAC 02	1st Shadow
1st Shadow + ACS-01 N°5	2nd Shadow	XNAC 02	2nd Shadow



Skin and beard base colour.



First layer of highlights on face and beard.



Second layer of highlights on face and beard.



Third and last layer of highlights on face and beard.



First layer of shadows on face and beard.



Second layer of shadows on face and beard.

5.3.1. Painting White Cloth

The next step in the study of using acrylic paint is to understand the process of painting white cloth. Properly painting white and black cloth is often difficult for beginners to execute.

Fortunately, there are professionals who have understood this problem and have marketed products such as the ACS-03 white paint set, which is perfectly designed to make painting an element in white quite easy.

I will illustrate this process on a miniature (PC-02 Buccaneer), which shows us a studied set of pleats and allows us to understand the role of the zenith/overhead light scheme.

I apply the base colour following the numbering shown on the set: #1 is the base and the first colour to be applied. As explained before, I apply several layers of the base, allowing each one to dry before continuing with the next.

Then we see that the first highlights (corresponding to colour # 2) do not create an abrupt colour change when compared with the base colour. This allows us to apply it without mixing:

one more advantage to using the white colour paint set.

The first highlights will cover the largest part of the surface, toward the upper parts of the pleats where beams of zenith light are focused.

I continue this way with the second highlight application, using colour # 3. While the first one was a little more watery, I can apply some rougher highlight strokes on these pleats with more dense paint. Finally, we use the third highlight colour (# 4), which is pure white.

Where shadows are concerned, the paint strokes are more delicate. In order to avoid an abrupt colour demarcation, I mix base colour # 1 + first shadow # 5. The surfaces to be darkened will be those which are hidden from the direction of the light. Now I come to the last shadow colour (# 6); this can be applied in a first layer mixed with the first shadow colour or, if I am looking for more contrast, can be applied directly without mixing.

Guide of Used Colors and Mixes (ACS-03)

ACS-03 N°1	Base
ACS-03 N°2	1st Highlight
ACS-03 N°3	2nd Highlight
ACS-03 N°4	3rd Highlight
ACS-03 N°5 + Base	1st Shadow
ACS-03 N°6	2nd Shadow



Base colour.



First highlights. As one can see, the brushstroke is pulled upward, focusing the illumination on that portion of the figure.



The second shade of highlight colour creates greater contrast between the base colour and the illuminated portions.



Third shade of highlights in matt white.



Brushstrokes should be more transparent in the first application of shadows, in order to avoid an abrupt line of colour change.



Last shadow colour should be intensified in the deepest pleats.

7.1. Basic Painting with Airbrush

Only a few years ago, this tool was used primarily for the painting of models, and only used in the world of miniatures for painting terrain or to apply primer to the figures.



Nowadays, all sort of figures of all sizes are painted with the airbrush, and an increasing number of painters who did not imagine using this tool for work that was exclusively reserved for paintbrushes, are now switching to this technique which offers excellent and rapid results.

As in the case of the paintbrush, when preparing the mixture in the airbrush cup, there is a relation between the paint and its thinner. It may vary depending on the type of application to be made (primer, base colour, glazing, etc.) although in general, the stroke coming out from the mouthpiece must be uniform and defined.

The following examples are made with a double-action airbrush, which allows for independent operation of the flow of air and paint. This works by pressing downward on the lever to allow the air to come out; to allow paint flow, move the lever backwards and press down. As the trigger is moved further back, more paint is released into the air flow.

The correct position to paint with the airbrush is perpendicular to the surface being painted. The stroke varies, depending on the distance between the mouth-

piece and the surface, and on the flow of paint applied. If the desired stroke is quite thin, we must use very little paint and place the mouthpiece near the surface; if, on the other hand, we wish to make a wider stroke, we must move away from the surface and pull the lever backwards to allow more paint to flow.

The most common mistakes when painting with an airbrush follow:

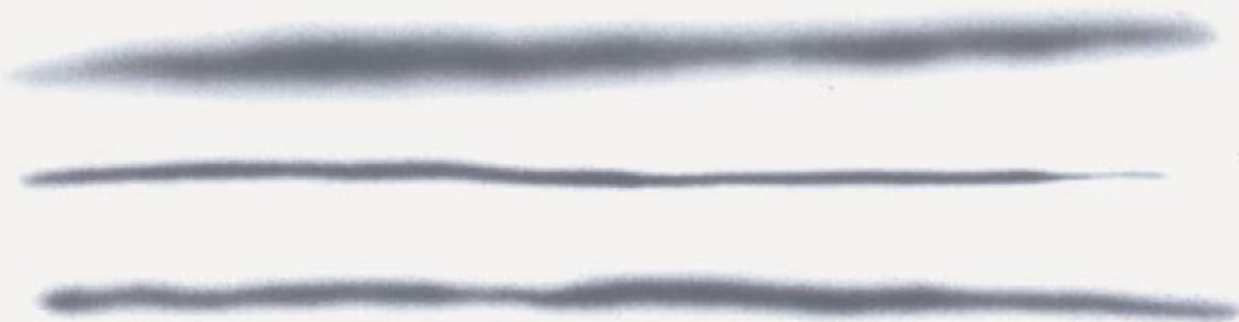
A) The paint comes out in mottled dots or heavy blocks of colour.

The solution is to take the mouthpiece apart, clean it, and prepare a new mixture with more liquid. Low pressure may be another reason for dotted paint. The solution is to adjust the compressor pressure, which must be between 1 and 2 bars.

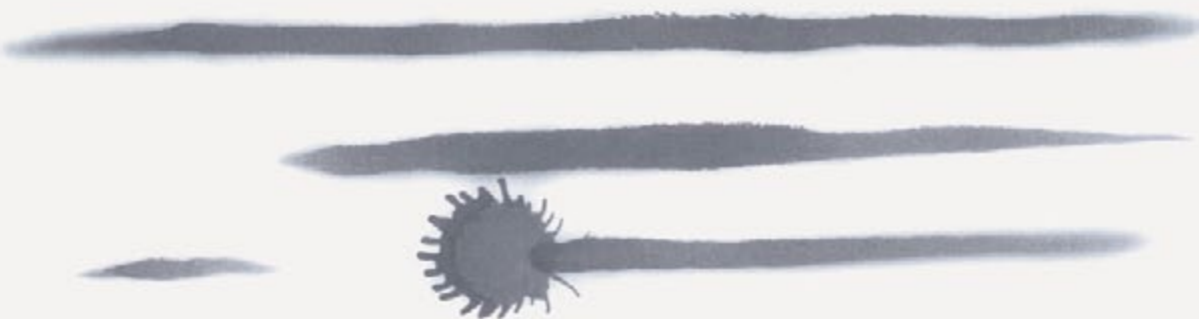
B) Paint is too liquid and spider-leg stains are produced.

The solution is to prepare a mixture with less thinner. To solve an excess of pressure, adjust the compressor pressure to 1 - 2 bars.

A)



B)



1



Add approximately 60% thinner designed specifically for these paints (XNAC and all paint sets).

2



Load a small quantity of paint on the paintbrush.

3



Mix the paint with the thinner in the airbrush cup until obtaining a fully uniform mixture.

4



Try several different strokes on a piece of paper to check that the paint-thinner mixture is correct.

5



Incorrect mixture due to an excess of paint and not enough thinner, a blocked mouthpiece, or low compressor pressure (A).

6



Incorrect mixture due to an excess of thinner and little paint, a blocked mouthpiece, or excessive compressor pressure (B).

