



## Gouache

The word gouache comes from the Italian word *guazzo*, which means a splash of paint. Gouache is an opaque medium consisting of pigment and finely ground chalk, bound with gum arabic. The pigment sits on the chalk carrier to give a very brilliant, clean matte finish. Variations on the medium have been used since the 12th century and, in modern times, it was used by such artists as Van Gogh, Klee, and Picasso. It is highly prized by designers and illustrators, both for its speed of use and the fact that it reproduces so well. It can be rewetted after it has dried to soften edges. Because it is opaque, gouache allows for overpainting, although great care in application is required because new layers will rewet and loosen layers underneath. It is generally used on paper and is more effective on smoother papers than traditional watercolor because it is designed to sit on the surface rather than soak into the fibers of the paper. Gouache is sold in tubes in a wide variety of colors. For fine art, attention should be paid to the permanence of each pigment, as many of the colors sold to designers are fugitive and will fade. Most manufacturers provide a permanence scale for their products. Use of UV glass in framing is probably a good idea. ■

## Comparative Table of Water-Based Media

### Egg Tempera

**Pros:** Very delicate handling, clear color, sharp edges, great layering possibilities. Very permanent. Can be varnished for protection.

**Cons:** Cannot paint wet-in-wet very well. Cannot build a heavy impasto. Requires careful preparation.

### Casein

**Pros:** Clean, clear color, especially in the lights. Sharp edges and clean glazes yet it still allows for a modest amount of wet-in-wet painting. Very permanent. Commercial casein paint is available in tubes. Can be varnished for protection.

**Cons:** Cannot be used on a flexible surface such as canvas. Does not allow for heavy impasto painting. Darks are often not very lustrous. Requires careful preparation if you choose to mix your own color.

### Gouache

**Pros:** Brilliant matte color. Can be put down as a perfect flat surface. Provides opacity and can be used as an impasto. Very quick to use. Can be rewetted. Very delicate brushwork shows up well. Edges are sharp and clear. Wide range of colors available.

**Cons:** Because it can be rewetted, too much overworking will quickly make the paint look soggy. Not good for glazing techniques. Surface is extremely delicate and must be protected. Many of the colors are not very permanent. Cannot be varnished and must be exhibited behind glass.

### Acrylic

**Pros:** Extremely versatile. Can be used in a wide variety of techniques from clear glazes to heavy impastos. Wide availability of mediums, gels, and modeling pastes allows the artist many options. Sta-Wet palettes now allow acrylic to be mixed like oil on the palette where it will stay wet for days. Impervious to water when dry, allowing extremely clean glazing and sharp edges. A retarder, or sprayed water, allows wet-in-wet painting.

**Cons:** An opaque acrylic surface never quite achieves the depth or luster of oil paint. The surface can often look a little plastic or gummed. Used transparently on paper, it doesn't deliver the beauty of true watercolor. Requires careful and immediate washing of brushes after use.