



### Tom's Materials List 2022

Here is a list of my current favoured materials. Where possible with links to UK sites to see more details, if not make a purchase.

PLEASE NOTE: These are a list of *my* materials but we have also provided general considerations and other possible alternatives.

I will give a detailed breakdown of every materials section, but I will also provide a simple summary at the end for ease of reference.

### GENERAL OVERVIEW:

- Watercolour paper – [More details below](#)
- Watercolour brushes – [More details below](#)
- Watercolour paints – Holbein & Daniel Smith. [More details below](#)
- Large water pot – Some people like to use one for cleaning, one for painting. All personal preference.
- Kitchen towel and/or flannel or rags – For cleaning and dabbing brushes.
- Board & Masking tape – Used if you wish to stick single sheets down, as well as have a nice white border at the end of the painting (plus the fun of peeling off the tape of course!)

Any stiff wooden board will do. I have various sizes. This also allows you to work on an angle, either using a table easel or my preferred method of popping a paint box or a few books under the board for the desired angle (very technical).

These approaches are not necessary if you are using gummed blocks & pads as these can still be propped up to the desired angle.

- Palette – I favour a simple aluminium foldout palette with 20 colour wells around the edge, one large mixing area and three smaller ones.

Some people may want a larger palette for more colours and more mixing area.

I also use the Clover Leaf Paintbox, particular for Plein Air, but a great general compact palette.

Shinhan also makes an excellent 24-colour plastic palette.

The Frank Herring Compact plastic palette is also a great little choice.

- Pencils – A small range of 2H, HB, 2B and 4B pencils generally covers everything needed. Although an HB & 2B would be plenty for most cases.

Obviously any pencil will do the trick but I particularly like the ease and simplicity of a mechanical pencil with a range of leads. My favourite is a simple Nicpro 2.0mm Mechanical Pencil with a range of leads and a sharpener.

- Eraser / Rubber – Any good rubber will do the trick. Some use a putty rubber but generally I find the classic Staedtler Mars Eraser works fine for my go to.
- Bulldog & other clips – Not a necessity by any means, but I like having a range of bulldog clips and mini-clamps to hand for a whole range of uses – from securing pads and palettes to boards and tables, to keeping everything together and tidy when out and about painting.

### WATERCOLOUR PAPER

Watercolour paper is a very personal choice, and there are many options out there. I would suggest pick just one or two to start. See how you get on and then try to slowly branch out and try a few more.

Alternatively, you could pick up a selection of single sheets and have a good old play. See if any jump out to you and start here.

I have found my preferences do change over time, and changing paper can be a nice way to push through when we're a bit stuck or if we want to mix things up a little. Trying a few different roughness types may be a good idea too.

Ideally, once you find something which works for you, stick with it for a bit and get to know it. This way you can really focus on your actual painting.

Really it is finding a balance between setting to know your current materials but also trying different things and experimenting, without constantly jumping from one thing to another.

I was once advised that once you have a feel for your current setup and materials, change one thing at a time. Meaning try a new paper but keep all the other variables the same – I think it is sound advice!

I almost always work on 100% cotton, although I do mention wood pulp paper below.

I always recommend the best paper you can afford, even when starting out. Cheap papers do simply not behave properly and actually make painting harder. Now, spending more money is not going to make you a better painter, but it will make things significantly easier, less frustrating and ultimately it will help your progression much more.

Unless sketching or just messing around I like to use 300gsm/140lb paper or higher.

I also very much prefer rougher texture papers. Sometimes you will see this called *Cold Press*, other times simply *Medium* or *Rough Texture*.

I love broken brushstrokes and the way the paint behaves on rougher paper. I generally do not use hot press paper as I prefer broken brush marks and also I find it dries too quickly for my preferred approach using lots of large washes. All personal preference.

There are various considerations for the format of your paper:

**Gummed Blocks** – I often use gummed blocks for ease - no stretching or sticking down required. They are good to go. If I want a white border I remove a sheet and stick it to my board. Gummed blocks are very versatile and come in a range of sizes.

**Single Sheets** – Generally I use these if I am going for ½ imperial or full imperial sheets, so larger paintings. All though some gummed blocks come this large. If wanted you can often get heavier weight paper in single sheets too.

**Spiral Pads & Sketch Pads** – Great for playing around and practising as well as on the move. I don't do finished paintings in these sorts of papers as they are generally of lesser quality. That said there are plenty of high-grade papers in sketchbook form.

Here are my current favourite papers with a brief description. Plus a few extra ones I sometimes use, have used or would recommend. You DO NOT need to use these papers, they are simply what I like. There are many, many fantastic makers and brands out there:

- **Baohong Professional** – My absolute favourite paper (currently). I use rough texture and sometimes medium texture. It is 100% cotton, 300gsm/140lb. Generally in the UK, it comes in Gummed blocks of A3 (12"x16") or smaller.

It stays wet for a long time. Colours really stay strong on it, with little change from wet to dry.

It is also an incredibly forgiving paper which is easy to lift out from and it can take a lot of water and paint, and painting, without scuffing up or overworking. It is also very easy to draw on. and even more importantly rub out from if needed.

- **Master's Choice (by Baohong)** – This is as good as identical to the paper above but it comes in a much wider range of gummed block sizes. It is very hard to get hold of in the UK. I do hope to stock it in the very near future.
- **Canson Moulin Du Roy** – 100% cotton, 300gsm. Gummed blocks, flip-pads and single sheets. I love this paper but it behaves very differently from the above. The final look of the paint is different and it can give some really interesting effects. It is softer and slightly less forgiving than the Baohong papers I like to use this when I feel like a change.
- **Winsor & Newton Professional** – 100% cotton, a range of textures. An excellent paper which stays wet for a nice amount of time and retains good colour vibrancy. This was my favourite paper for some time before I moved to Baohong
- **Baohong Academy Range** – 100% cotton, 300gsm. Their *student* range (good quality entry level) so it is more affordable but still an excellent paper. It has a slightly different grain and feel to the professional. It is slightly softer on the surface.

In the UK comes in A3 (12"x16") or smaller. It doesn't behave quite the same as the professional range but it is a more affordable entry into cotton papers and a great paper. I often use this for smaller studies and sketches.

- **Winsor & Newton Classic** – This is a wood pulp paper, but an excellent one. It behaves in a very similar way to cotton paper and I would highly recommend this for those starting out and looking for a good paper but at a very affordable price. It comes in a nice range of sizes and formats too.

A few interesting papers which I very occasionally use to mix things up:

- Hahnemuhle Cornwall Cold press matt – 450gsm, 100% cotton. I call this a “novelty” paper as it behaves quite differently from other watercolour paper. Often giving some weird and interesting effects.
- Khadi Paper – A beautiful 100% cotton rag paper, handmade in India. Cotton rag is generally quite a texture and stays wet for a long time. Unless heavily bleached it is usually a little duller and more natural in colour. This paper has a lovely deckled/rough edge on all 4 sides.
- Jackson’s Eco Paper - Another wonderful 100% cotton rag paper, also handmade in India. A good alternative to Khadi if you like to use Vegan Art supplies (Khadi uses an animal-derived sizing, as do many manufacturers.)
- This paper comes in a great range of sizes, weights and textures. It’s quite a speciality paper and takes some getting used to, but the rough texture stays wet for an incredibly long time and gives some amazing effects. Colours really pop on it but again the paper itself is a little duller and grey.
- Two Rivers Paper (also Jackson’s Two Rivers) - A wonderful traditionally handmade paper here in the UK. Again, behaves slightly differently from many other papers and takes some getting used to, but worth a play sometime.

As mentioned, there are many choices, to name just a few; Hahnemule, Fabriano, Stonehenge by Legion Papers, Saunders Waterford, Bockingford, and St Cuthbert's Mill. All make excellent papers.

## BRUSHES

I would break my own brush selection down into 3 categories:

- Large mop
- Medium/small mop
- Small round

You could replace the medium/small mop for a large round. I prefer the mop style as it holds more water and pigment which suits the way I work.

Again there are a huge array of options. I currently use all synthetic hair brushes. My current favourite brushes I use for all my paintings are:

- Escoda Ultimo Size 18 Mop – Faux squirrel hair, very soft. Holds loads of pigment and water. Great for large washes and big bold brushstrokes, but also comes to a fine point for more control if needed.
- Winsor & Newton Professional, medium size quill – Synthetic squirrel. Much stiffer and springier than the above but still holds a nice amount of pigment and water. This one comes and goes for me but I do like having it to hand.
- Jackson’s Raven Size 0 mop – A small mop which holds loads of water pigment but due to its much smaller size gives more control and is great for homing in on smaller areas where you still want the paint to flow. They have a variety of sizes. Always to hand!
- Size 8 & 10 Round, Winsor & Newton Professional, Synthetic Sable – A slightly different style of brush which hold less water and pigment but as a result gives

much more control to those smaller areas and details. I don't go any smaller than this.

I do have a rigger and the odd other brush but they rarely get used.

I am also currently trying out a wide range of Rosemary & Co Synthetic watercolour brushes. A selection of mops, quills, rounds and even a couple of flats. I will of course report back on these once I've used them more.

As with papers and paints, there are a huge array of brushes. You do not have to use these brushes mentioned and if you find your own favourite brushes...great!!

Other brushes I have used over the years are more from Jackson's as they make an excellent range of brushes (at great prices); and Da Vinci who also make a very varied and excellent range of quality brushes.

### PAINTS & COLOURS

I use almost exclusively Holbein & Daniel Smith colours. They both use a very simple set of high-quality ingredients.

Holbein paints have excellent strength and clarity. Generally, their colours have an excellent lightfastness and they have a broad range of colours. There is also a brand called PWC by ShinHan Arts. They appear to be incredibly similar, if not the same as Holbein, so I often end up with these too. In the list below consider anything Holbein also being PWC if needed.

Most people know of Daniel Smith. Possibly the leading name in watercolour paints. Again they have excellent strength and clarity, plus are well known for their strong granulation.

Whilst there is certainly a fair bit of hype around the Daniel Smith brand they are excellent paints, and in my opinion, it is justified. Believe it or not, despite their growing size, they have remained a relatively small-scale operation with a real focus on uncompromising quality (no I am not affiliated with them in any way! Ha!).

I do not like all of their colours, hence why I mix and match with Holbein. They also have a large range of weird and wonderful colours that do all sorts of magical things. Be warned though...it's quite an art materials rabbit hole!

Whilst they used to be notably more expensive than most others, in recent years the playing field is a bit more level in that respect.

As with papers and brushes, buying the best you can afford does make a difference! No, they won't make you a better painter, but they will make the whole journey much easier and less frustrating. When combined with good paper and brushes that do what they are supposed to, a good set of paint will behave like "proper" watercolours, and also a little goes a long way because of the quality.

So I generally recommend Artist Quality if you can. Jackson's Art Supplies here in the UK make an excellent range of Professional Watercolour Paints but they are a little more affordable than some of the larger names.

I prefer using tube paints as I do like a good amount of wet pigment available. However these large blobs often dry on my palette and can be re-wetted, so behave much like pans, but being able to squeeze large fresh blobs out is something I like.

Below is a list of my colours.

You will also see pigment numbers. Lots of colours are named the same across brands, but in many cases, the same pigments are given different colour names.

I have listed a core group of basic essentials and their alternatives. Below that are some common additions, and below that are some extra "bonus colours".

I generally like to use transparent colours as very simply it is harder to make muddy mixtures. Using opaque colours, especially more than 1 in a mix, can make colours go very dull and flat. However, opaque colours are wonderful and do provide a really strong hit of colour if needed, as well as providing interesting effects when dropped into washes.

Essential Core Group (a warm and cool of each primary):

- French Ultramarine or Ultramarine Blue PB29 (warm) – A classic colour. Quite gentle and very warm. Not to everyone's taste and is often replaced with Cobalt, but I love it! Great colour for glazing transparent shadows and mixes well with all colours.
- Prussian Blue PB27 and/or Pthalo Blue Yellow Shade PB15 or Pthalo Blue Green Shade PB15:3 (cool) – I own both. Generally, I use Prussian as Pthalo is very strong! However, if you want really strong powerful bright greens, and also turquoise-type blues, Pthalo is perfect. Both make lovely deep rich darks when mixed with an orangey warm red, or a touch of cooler red and a transparent yellow.
- Pyrrole Red PR254 (warm) – A wonderful rich "fire engine" red. It can be hard to find a transparent warm red. All though I have been told of Winsor Red being exactly this. Generally, these warmer reds are semi-opaque if not fully opaque. A very common alternative would be Cadmium red, also a great colour but more opaque. Also Pyrrole I feel is brighter and cleaner than Cadmium. Other alternatives could be Permanent Red, Naphthol Red, Cadmium Red light, or Vermillion.
- Quinacridone Red PV19 (cool) – A very versatile Red. Whilst cool in bias, so great for pinks and purples, it is also extremely clean and bright so actually makes surprisingly vibrant oranges with the right yellow. Just a great colour! Alternatives could be the classic Alizarin Crimson (slightly darker and not quite so bright, but a beautiful colour) and Carmine. I own all three of these but mostly favour Quinacridone Red's versatility. You could also include Permanent Rose and Magentas for a very pinky cool Red.
- New Gamboge Yellow PY154,150,110 (warm) – A beautifully clean and transparent warm yellow. Cadmium Yellow and Cadmium Yellow Deep (more orangey) are a very common warm yellow, however, they are generally very opaque so I favour New Gamboge. However, the Opaque Cadmiums provide excellent strength of colour. You could also use Indian Yellow, but this is not as versatile.
- Aureolin PY154,175,150 (cool) – A beautiful cool yellow which gives wonderful greens, all though bright and clean enough that it can still produce nice vibrant oranges. Traditionally this is not a very lightfast colour, fading and altering over time over time. However, Daniel Smith and Holbein suggest that their version is much more light fast and does not alter over time. Whilst I have never had any issues with these colours there still seems to be some debate, so as a result, I am

currently playing around with a few more lightfast, transparent, modern alternatives  
- I will update when I know more.

Commonly used additions (whilst the above could provide you with everything you need, these are some great additional colours which I use often)

- Cobalt Blue PB28 (warm) – A beautiful, often fairly opaque blue with a warm bias. Gives lovely clean purples and a great colour to include in skies. A classic colour to have on the palette.
- Indian Yellow PY83 (warm) – I love this yellow so much! A beautiful warm sunny yellow. It creates interesting greens, although it can easily create sludgy colours if not careful, so it is not always appropriate.
- Permanent Yellow Orange PY74,83 by Holbein – It is generally easy to mix oranges, but sometimes it's nice to have a bright clean orange straight out of a tube. This one, with a little opacity, does allow for hot spots of really intense orange if needed. It is really a tertiary colour (yellow orange) but I prefer it over Cadmium Orange and other more pure oranges because it is a little lighter and more vibrant.
- Yellow Ochre PY42/43 (cool and earthy) – A traditional and wonderful earth colour. Whilst we can get close by mixing the core group it is just lovely to have this wonderful earth colour on the palette. Often opaque can be useful although the Daniel Smith version is at least semi-transparent. Some people use Raw Sienna as an alternative, plus Daniel Smith has a range of earthy yellows which are all subtly different, but possible replacements or alternatives.
- Burnt Sienna PBr7 / Quinacridone Deep Gold PY150 (warm and earthy) – Another wonderful earth colour. Burnt Sienna is a well-loved traditional colour which always deserves a little spot on the palette. All though saying that I actually use an alternative called Quinacridone Deep Gold. It is an almost direct replacement- a little more vibrant and orangey, and I've come to really like it. Both make great darks with ultramarine blue.
- Turquoise Blue by Holbein PG7, PB185, PW6 – I have always found mixing a satisfying turquoise quite hard, so I do like to have a couple on hand straight out of the tube. This is a particular favourite. It is quite fairly dark (neat it acts as a dark mid-tone), heavy and opaque so needs to be used carefully.

It gives a really intense turquoise and creates beautiful effects when splattered into drying washes. Due to its opacity and mid-tonal value, it can be used neat out of the tube to liven dark areas up and provide some fun dry brush marks at the end of a painting.

I also use a colour called Cobalt Teal. This is a little more transparent and lighter in tone. A beautiful vibrant turquoise. I usually use the Daniel Smith version.

- Lavender by Holbein PB28, PV15, PW6 – I always have this opaque colour on the palette. It is very versatile. Watered down it makes beautiful soft purple blue colours and mixes nicely with other colours to create soft greys. It is very heavy and opaque so must be used with care so as not to create muddy mixes and dull areas of paint. It has a similar feel as if you were to add an opaque white or Gouache (opaque watercolour) to a warm blue like Ultramarine or Cobalt.

My favourite use though is neat out of the tube, used thick. It works well as a low light (basically a lighter tone within a shadow area) and it can be great for popping on missed lights when you don't want them to be pure white.

Like the opaque turquoise above it also creates lovely effects when splattered into drying washes

- **White Gouache** – I actually use a Gouache by Harodam but you could use any good quality white Gouache. I find it has a bit more opacity and solidness than Titanium white or Chinese white watercolour, but these can be used exactly the same.

I very rarely, if ever, use it in mixes. I generally use it for missed highlights right at the end of a painting. Many traditional watercolourists frown upon using opaque white. I only do so if really necessary but have absolutely no problem with doing so. In my opinion, if it makes the difference between a "so, so" painting and a good one, then why not? However, less is always more, and often just a few brush strokes are plenty!

Some fun extras and bonus colours that do make it onto the palette from time to time:

- **Manganese Blue PB15 (cool)** - I use this instead of Cerulean. Cerulean is classic colour but is often very opaque and I find it a little heavy for my use. Manganese is a vibrant, bright, clean and transparent cool blue. It is not as strong as Pthalo and has a lighter feel to it. Think Kingfisher blue. Makes beautiful clean and vibrant greens too.
- **Aussie Red Gold by Daniel Smith** – Oh what a stunning colour. Think reddy orange warm earthy colour. An orange sunset on red cliffs type feel. It is clean and vibrant with a slightly yellow feel. I don't find it great for mixing with other colours but as a base colour, and also as a warm shadow glaze colour it is just wonderful. By no means a necessity but using it straight out of the tube in painting is great fun!
- **Indigo & Indanthrone Blues** – Two very different blues, both of which I love to use. Both are very dark and intense. Indigo is more greyed down and neutral, and Indanthrone with a slightly warmer bias.
- **Neutral Tint** – Essentially a neutral black. Great for doing tonal studies. I also find it a very useful colour for making immediate darks, or a base dark to tint with other colours. The danger is falling back on it always for shadows and darks as it is so neutral you can end up with a very dull flat painting. However, used consciously and with purpose this is a very useful colour indeed; and if you are purposely working with neutral colours and blacks it makes things much easier.
- **Tube Greens** – I like mixing greens. That's just me. I very rarely use them from a tube, and when I do they usually get altered with yellows and blues anyway. I have found Viridian Green to be a useful one.
- **Tube Purples** – As with Greens I generally find I can mix all the purples I need. Again though there are some beautiful tube purples, from Dioxazine to Cobalt Violet, Mineral Violet and so on. Some are very opaque. Some are glowing and transparent. Always worth an explore!



## SUMMARY

Ok. So that's a lot of information. Let me summarise my setup which I use most of the time, let's say 90% of the time to make a point. This would certainly be plenty for kicking off and for much of this watercolour school.

This would be a great place to start and build out from, bearing in mind you can of course swap out any one thing for your current favourite or alternatives.

- Baohong Professional Paper – Gummed Block. 100% Cotton. Rough Grain 300gsm/140lb
- Holbein & Daniel Smith Paints – Basic set: French Ultramarine, Prussian Blue or Pthalo, Quinacridone Red, Pyrrole Red, New Gamboge Yellow, Aureolin Yellow or similar. Plus Lavender, Turquoise Blue and White Gouache
- A small selection of Brushes – I often use only 3 brushes or less for a single painting, any others are just *extras*: Escoda Ultimo Mop, size 18; Jackson's Raven Mop, size 0 (you could swap this for a larger round brush instead of a mop); Size 8 or 10 round, synthetic sable, Winsor & Newton (so many other choices for a simple round)
- Board & tape if needed
- Large water pot
- Kitchen towel and/or rag
- Aluminium palette – Fold out, simple 20-colour well
- Pencil & Eraser