

Painting Alla Prima: Experimenting with Oil Paint - Santa Monica College
Todd Carpenter

In this class, we will use oil paint alla prima (working quickly using wet layers of paint) to experiment with the art of painting. The class will cover a various painting techniques and concepts, largely following these general themes:

1. Basic concepts of alla prima painting and examples of artists who have used the method.
2. Painting in a gestural, painterly manner. Connections between subject, paint, and artist.
3. The use of color value/tone for the portrayal of depth, realism, mood, etc.
4. Organizing compositions: choosing, simplifying, arranging, and connecting subjects.
5. Imparting visual impact through the use of color, contrast, composition, detail, subject, etc.
6. Approaches to making creative, original paintings. Experimentation in painting.

The class is open to students at all levels, including experienced painters looking to make their work more original, as well as beginners who wish to learn simple but effective painting techniques.

First day of class:

Bring something to paint on (a stretched canvas, panel, etc), brushes, palette knife, palette, odorless solvent, paper towels, container with lid for solvent, paints, and several photographs (or ideas) of potential painting subjects. See below for detailed supply list.

Supply list

Canvases or panels. At least 4 primed stretched canvases, canvas panels, artist panels, etc., in any size.

Brushes. A few in various sizes and shapes.

Palette knife.

Palette. Disposable palette pad or flat palette made of plastic, glass, etc.

Medium. Refined linseed oil for oil paint if needed. If using acrylic, bring acrylic retarder (or similar).

Solvent. Turpenoid or Gamsol if using oil paints. Odorless solvents only.

Cleanup supplies. Brush cleaning soap or hand soap. Paper towels or rags.

Containers. Small containers with lids for solvents and mediums. Large water cup for acrylic.

Paints. Some of the techniques covered in this class require working wet-on-wet, and therefore the use of oil paints is recommended. You can use acrylics if you prefer, but you may need to use a retarder.

Choice of paint colors is up to the student. You can even work using a limited palette if you wish. If you are not sure what to get, this is one possible set of colors: 1. Titanium White, 2. Ivory Black, 3. Cadmium Red Light or Medium, 4. Alizarin Crimson, 5. Ultramarine Blue, 6. Viridian, 7. Cadmium Yellow Light or Lemon Yellow, 8. Cadmium Yellow Dark, 9. Burnt Umber, 10. Burnt Sienna

Subject matter. We will work from photographs for at least some assignments, so bring photos (digital or print) of subjects you want to paint. For each assignment bring several to choose from.