

Mediums for Airbrush

Water-Based: Gouache

Gouache, pronounced “gwahsh,” is an opaque watercolor medium that is perfect to use with an airbrush. Following are a few unique qualities of this paint to consider.

Always insist on the best quality of gouache because this finely ground paint is unlikely to clog the airbrush. Gouache is one of the most opaque paints that can be applied with the airbrush. It will cover an existing painted area even quicker than opaque acrylic colors. The difference is that when dry, gouache remains water soluble and can be manipulated, whereas acrylic artist colors become permanent and impervious to moisture.

Gouache was originally the name of the technique associated with painting with opaque watercolor. It’s made of the same material as transparent watercolor with the addition of precipitated chalk to render it opaque. Today, however, gouache usually refers to the paint rather than the technique.

In its heyday, gouache was preferred by illustrators and photo retouchers alike. Years ago it was often handmade by artists, as it's quite easy to make, and was initially designed to not necessarily be colorfast or permanent. Illustrators were primarily interested in the speed of application rather than the longevity of the artwork. However, years later many illustrators regret having made their own paint to do renderings that became valuable over time but—unfortunately—were not done in a permanent medium.

Today, commercial brands of gouache, which are known as designer’s gouache and still manufactured for the commercial art field and the fine art realm, are lightfast and very durable with an absolutely brilliant color range. This wide range of manufacturer-made designer gouache colors is available in tubes, jars, blocks and powder form, depending on the manufacturer.

There is also a line of grey-valued gouache that is coordinated for black and white photographic retouching—in which there has been a resurgence of interest. These grey-valued paints were originally designed for black and white photography and were numbered from 0 (white) to 7 (black), with six grey values in between. They were easily identified by the camera and came warm, cool and neutral to match the tone of photographic paper. Although today the retouching of photographs by hand is not as popular as in the past, it is still an interesting process with which to experiment for artists.

Because gouache is a water-based medium, it is ideal for airbrush technique, since it thins with just water. Once dry, it holds up to repeated frisketing with self-adhering frisket film and there’s no picking or lifting of the painted surface.

Gouache is compatible with paper surfaces, illustration board, Claybord, Mylar, acetate and photographic paper. It can also be used on canvas panels and is recommended for use on rigid surfaces, but it can also be painted on gessoed canvas if the finished painting is varnished. Paintings done in gouache are usually exhibited matted and framed under glass or Plexiglas.



Gouache is ideal for use with airbrush technique. It's one of the least toxic materials to spray, is easily cleaned from the airbrush with soap and water, and the



radiance of the color is hard to achieve with any other type of paint. **Da Vinci’s Designers Gouache** is the opaque version of its professional watercolor. The extensive full color range is formulated using lightfast pigments approved by ASTM and is available in their original 37mL tubes. This collection is perfect for artists and designers seeking the highest quality paint with exceptional performance. **Schmincke’s Horadam Gouache** contains the best genuine artists’ pigments highly concentrated, has maximum opacity without adding white and the highest lightfastness. There are 39 single pigment colours for brilliant mixing results. See your retailer and visit www.davincipaints.com and www.chartpak.com/schmincke for additional product information.