

McGill University School of Architecture Sketching School 2016 – Saint John, New Brunswick

Notes on media and equipment

Required equipment (from the course outline):

Watercolours, watercolour paper, brushes, pencils, pen and ink, conté crayon, sketchbooks (including the standard 13 x 21cm Moleskine with heavy-weight paper) and drawing paper of varying size and type. Sketch pads, sheet material and watercolour blocks should range from 9" x 12" to 18" x 24".

If you need to buy a set of watercolours, you could consider a set with 'cakes', or you could purchase separate tubes of pigment. If you decide to buy the separate tubes, you will need to develop a versatile palette. Below is one suggestion for a 12-colour palette – please note that the palette does NOT include black or white, which are unnecessary.

Reds: Alizarin Crimson, Indian Red

Blues: French Ultramarine, Cobalt Blue

Yellows (difficult): Cadmium Yellow Pale, Yellow Ochre

Greens: Hooker's Green, Olive Green

Browns: Burnt Umber, Burnt Sienna, Raw Umber

Other: Payne's Grey



Tube colours are squeezed into the shaped pockets on a blank palette. They will dry and can be used for years like traditional 'cakes'. In other words, you do not have to wash your palette at the end of every sketch – you should clean it, but try to save the dabs of pigment.



Blank mixing palettes are available in a variety of sizes and are typically made of metal or plastic. They almost always provide shallow trays for mixing and pockets for dabs of pigment. Many painters like to arrange the colours in a logical pattern or sequence, one that suits their particular way of working.



An example of a compact watercolour set (optional) manufactured by Winsor & Newton, with refillable cakes, an integrated water reservoir and a small mixing tray that clips on at one end.

As for sketchbooks and pads, we recommend, in addition to the list above, a small pocket notebook or sketchpad for thumbnail sketches and experiments with wash and watercolour. A few good sable or synthetic brushes will also be required: a small and medium round and a medium to large (1/2 inch or 3/4 inch) flat brush are always useful.



Brushes: flats and rounds, varying sizes



Compact 'pocket' brushes (optional)

You will also need a closed container for water and at least two separate cups for mixing washes. If you try to work with one cup of water, your colours will become muddy very quickly.



Folding or collapsible cups work very well, as well as refillable water bottles. You can find cups and bottles in a variety of sizes (and colours) in any camping store.

Finally, please be sure to bring masking tape (1/2 or 3/4 inch in width) and rags with you. You will use the tape to secure loose corners and to lay out different work areas on your watercolour paper - the masking tape used by housepainters is cheap, easily removed without tearing the paper, and reusable. You will need the rags - cotton always works best - to 'lift' extra water from the brush or from the paper, to mop up undesirable spills, and to clean up when you're ready to leave.