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Colouring Technique

by Kim Gowney

Problem, how do you describe on paper the use of spirit stains to colour wood?

Before making a start I recommend you watch Andy Coats's YouTube video, it has a wealth of information on the topic..

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mhxoEAMXtPE>

I may well produce one myself sometime when money permits a better camera.

But, to try and convey some idea of my own approach I will put what I can to text.

All the products I use in this process are from the Chestnut company, I find them very suitable and have not need to look elsewhere so far.

First off then, this is not a precise art form, I am certainly no expert and have much to learn and discover as well. As such, when deciding on whether to colour or not is often a matter of being bold enough to give it a go. Don't think that only plain wood can benefit from colouring, very decorative wood like burrs can look stunning coloured.

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First off then, having decided to have a go and chosen your piece, you ought to have some idea in mind, as to general theme i.e. will it be warm or cold.

The Cool colours in the range are the turquoise blue (just called Blue) The Green and the Red (yes you can have cool reds, anything towards the more Raspberry end of the spectrum is considered a cool red)

The warm colours are the Orange, Yellow, Purple and Dark Blue. Black is neutral being in fact the absence of any colour. The White is a chalky liquid which can be used to make pastel shades, but I have not had a lot of success with it so far.

You can of course mix any of these colours in any combination, but overdo it and you will end up with an unco-ordinated dark and rather muddy mess rather than a vibrant blend of colour, it would be the task of weeks to write in full the behaviour of various colour mixes and blends, so I am not going to attempt that, I will try to describe the colouring of the green globe featured in the Triple Mop polishing Pamphlet.

First off I decided that green would be the overall colour, used straight out of the pot the green stain is an extremely bright, vivid and rather acid green, you could well get away with it alone if the piece suited it, but I find that toning it down a little adds to the depth of colour and doing so in a variety of ways adds to the overall interest of the finished article.

Application:-

Get yourself some good bristle brushes, I located some on Amazon, I started with two packs and can recommend them.

<http://www.amazon.co.uk/Hogs-Hair-Childrens-Paint-Brushes/dp/B001UJX44Y>

Also you should get some size 10 softer brushes for more subtle applications of colour, a local art shop or an online search should find you something suitable.

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<http://www.kimsart.co.uk/index.html>
<http://kimswoodart.blogspot.co.uk/>

Published by:-Chas Jones (<http://www.quest42.co.uk/woodwork/home.html>)

For lacquering I use the acrylic sanding sealer, two coats at least (more if the wood is absorbing it on the end grain) I keep adding coats until the wood is fully sealed and it does not suck it in any more, I also denib between coats with 400 grit to maintain as smooth a finish as possible. Once the sealer stage is complete I apply the lacquer, you can use either the satin or the gloss, Phil Irons told me that the Satin is slightly heavier and easier to get a build with, I have no reason to doubt him and find it works well for me. It can be buffed to a gloss finish very easily with the 3 wheel system. The gloss lacquer though is also very good, but does have the drawback of drying in such a manner that it leaves small dimples, these can be seen in the first few images of the globe. in the Colour Buffing Pamphlet I believe it is just a factor of the acrylic coat shrinking and tightening into the grain as the solvent dries out from it. As such, for both the gloss and the satin you should leave the buffing for a good three or four days after spraying and in a warm place too, to make sure you don't have to do it twice.

I have had to rebuff many of the items I made because I was too quick to polish them up, the drying process was not fully complete and the dimples reappeared.

I think I have covered the subject as well as I can in text, a video might help, but that will be sometime later this year at best.

Preparation of the Piece:

Most important is to be sure to remove every last scratch mark, especially any that circumnavigate the item, these will show up in glaring detail with the first touch of stain, the reason is, the scratch, if you magnified it, would show up as a tear with lots of fibres waving about ready to soak up the stain, this absorbent property means a proportionally greater amount of colour compared to adjacent areas and thus you get a dark line, it isn't pretty. So I start once the item has been sanded to a finish, this is usually 400 grit, though I have gone finer it rarely make a visible difference below this.

The best way to avoid and indeed remove such lines is to follow a proper sanding sequence, 120, 180, 240, 320, 400. Where you start in the grits is of course dependent upon your turning skills and the wood, but be certain to remove all toolmarks prior to the 180 (tool bruising etc. will show up just like the scratches)

You can sand either by hand as the item rotates, with a friction driven rotary pad or a drill mounted pad, I recommend the later as the better option for most external work at least.

Sand down to 240 grit with the lathe running at about 900 rpm or less, then when you change to 320, slow the lathe right down if you can and hold the drill so that the top of the pad which will move the paper either to the left or to the right (depending on whether you have a reversible drill or not) across the direction of rotation, in other words, the abrasive action is at right angles to the scratch marks you would leave if you hand sanded while it turned. This technique is excellent for removing small, hard to see scratches from your work.

So, back to the globe.

Method:-

I first applied the green all over the exterior straight from the pot. To bring the eye watering green to heel I then went over the whole thing with a coat of orange, being virtually the opposite of green it tones it down very effectively and warms it slightly. Then deciding that it should be cool one side and warm the other, I applied some yellow over the warm part (you can see this in the finished item) and a small amount of blue over the other, I also wanted it to darken towards the bottom, so I applied some purple to the base section, now this has the effect combined with the green and orange of almost knocking all colour out and leaving a very dark brown, to blend the colours I then go over the whole thing with a further coat of green mixed with some orange in the manner of a wash as used by watercolourists, this has the effect of tying the other colours together. You can of course continue in this vein, applying a bit more blue to the cool patch if it has unduly warmed, but care is needed not to overdo it, the stains do have a solid component and the addition of more stain to an area heavily coloured can have the effect of washing it out and pushing the colour away to form a cloud shape, I have used this effect deliberately in one of my pieces and it looked very attractive, however it is a very tricky thing to get right and I have not had much success since when trying it again.

On the whole you need to just do a wash or two over the blended colours and leave it to dry.

Once it is dry (give it 24hrs in a warm room to be sure) you can remount it and gently smooth the surface with a bit of NyWeb (yellow) to denib it, then wipe it over with a tack cloth or similar and apply either an oil finish such as finishing oil, or lacquer. I find lacquer the better option as a glass like finish really makes the colour stand out and look like a polished gem.

The finished Globe referred to, it can be seen in various stages of buffing in the Colour Buffing Pamphlet.

