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Scene Painting with Supersaturated Roscopaint

A guide to using the paint on a variety of stagecraft materials.

About the Author

Paul Wonsek is resident designer at the Starlight Theatre in Kansas City, Missouri. At the Starlight, the country's second largest outdoor theatre, he has designed such productions as "My Fair Lady", "Bye Bye Birdie" and "L'il Abner". He has also designed variety acts for Joel Grey, Peter Nero, Jack Jones and Melissa Manchester.

Mr. Wonsek was resident designer at the Loretto-Hilton Repertory Theatre in St. Louis and guest designer at such theatres as the Coconut Grove in Miami, the Studio Arena in Buffalo and the Center Stage in Baltimore. He recently designed the national tours of "Guys and Dolls" and "Anything Goes".

Mr. Wonsek's academic experience includes full time teaching positions at Boston University, Webster College, Wright State University and Moorhead State University.

Advantages of the Supersaturated Paint System

The Rosco Supersaturated Paint System has been specifically formulated to offer the scenic artist a matte, non-reflective medium with the versatility of dry colour and the permanence and flexibility of vinyl acrylic paint.

The principal advantage of dry colour has always been the brilliant intensity of colour, even when the paint is heavily diluted with water. Supersaturated Roscopaint maintains this vibrant colour saturation, yet eliminated the difficulties of mixing and storage associated with dry pigment.

The adhesive quality of theatrical paint has become more important as plastic, steel and a range of new materials are now so widely used. It is possible to make dry pigment and case in paints adhere to these non-porous surfaces, but only when the paint has been supplemented with additives. Supersaturated Roscopaint has been formulated to adhere to virtually every modern scenic surface, even when diluted.

Some contemporary stage craft material, such as vacuum-formed plastic and urethane foam, have flexible surfaces, creating yet another problem for scenic paint. Dry pigment and case in paints will crack or chip on pliable surfaces. Since Supersaturated Roscopaint is flexible and will not crack, it may be used on these new scenic surfaces.

Traditional soft goods, such as muslin drops and costume fabrics, retain their "hand" when painted with Roscopaint, yet the paint has the permanency required for costume and touring applications.

Supersaturated Roscopaint is increasingly used in production situations where paint durability is the critical requirement. The vinyl acrylic base is waterproof, ideal for outdoor theatres, it won't spoil, even when mixed with water, and can be stored for extended periods. Perhaps most important, the durability of Roscopaint saves valuable touch-up time and assures that clean, freshly painted look over a long run.

Characteristics of Supersaturated Paint

No one paint system fulfils all the needs of the scenic artist. Some paints are more opaque, others have a wider colour range. Adhesive properties and flexibility vary. Some systems may be heavily diluted, others must be used full strength. While Roscopaint fulfils many of the needs of the "new stage craft", the choice of medium is still a matter of personal preference and experience.

Roscopaint is designed to be mixed with water. the minimum working consistency is one part water to one part paint, a one to one dilution. At this dilution, most colours are reasonably opaque, providing even coverage when painted over a primed white surface.

Many scenic shops use latex or casein when opacity is required. Household latex can be used for base coating, but intense theatrical colours are not generally available. Furthermore, household latex has a sheen, even when labelled "flat". Casein paints, such as iddings as Deep colours, offer a range of intense opaque scenic colours. These paints are economical when applied to porous surfaces such as muslin but require adhesive additives when used on other scenic surfaces.

As more water is added to Roscopaint colours the cost per gallon is decreased and the system becomes more and more economical. At 3:1, Roscopaint is

similar in colour quality to watercolour paint. At 6:1, Roscopaint is a glaze that can be applied like aniline dye. Even at 10:1, Roscopaint has good adhesion and many of the colours retain their intensity.

In diluted consistencies from 3:1 to 30:1, Roscopaint is a translucent medium and should be worked as a watercolour. Colours are generally applied from light to dark, using the white of the original surface as the highlight value. The final visual appearance is a combined effect of the original surface colour reading through the various applied paints. This layered colour creates surface depth, the basic quality of watercolour painting.

Other scenic paint media such as casein and aniline dye can be used for watercolour techniques. Generally, the diluted casein colours are extremely vibrant and useful for translucencies when stability is not a requirement.

Using Supersaturated Roscopaint

Painting advice on using the Multipurpose Vinyl Acrylic Paint System:

Preparing the Surface

Preparation of the surface is accomplished with the first coat of paint - the prime coat. Scenic painters require different surfaces for different painting techniques. For soft blending and transparent washes an absorptive surface is generally used. For lining and woodgraining, a smoother, less porous surface is preferred.

For priming, the Roscopaint system includes White Base. White Base is a concentrated vinyl acrylic emulsion with heavy titanium dioxide fill. For priming, White base must be thinned with water,

When using watercolour techniques, the surface should be relatively absorptive. On new muslin, a prime coat of two parts water to one part White Base will create a smooth, slick surface. The 2:1 prime will allow long, continuous strokes of colour, necessary for lining and woodgraining techniques. A 6:1 prime will be more absorptive, suitable for soft blending of colours necessary for water work.

When painting translucently on old flats, all surfaces should be primed with the same colour usually opaque white or a light value. 1:1 White Base or inexpensive latex can be used for this procedure. An old flat with many coats of paint is non-porous, causing watered paints to streak and bead. A small quantity of liquid dishwashing detergent will increase the surface tension of the paint, allowing the colour to flow more evenly.

Opaque painting usually requires thicker painting consistencies, Primed surfaces should be less absorptive, reducing the resistance to the paint brush.

Even with opaque colours, it is usually a good practice

to prime old flats. Many painters store old paint in one large container, priming flats with this greyed mixture. The new base colour can then usually be applied in one coat reducing the amount of new paint required. Saving waste acrylic or latex paint saves money in future productions, an advantage over casein or dry colour systems which are subject to organic deterioration.

The proper prime can be the most important step in the painting procedure. A primed surface that is too absorptive will consume extra paint, increasing the cost per square foot. A surface that is too slick will resist watercolour techniques, revealing unwanted brush strokes. Always experiment with surface materials and painting procedures before committing to large areas of colour.

The Roscopaint system is comprised of fifteen colours. White Base and Gloss Medium. While convenient to maintain a quantity of all system components, a smaller inventory can produce some effective results.

Choosing the Colours

White Base.

White Base is a versatile, non reflective white vinyl acrylic paint. Used for priming, it will adhere to virtually any surface. As a tinting medium, White Base will increase opacity of Roscopaint colours and add acrylic properties to dry pigment and casein. White Base can be used as a binder for newspaper or sawdust, to produce interesting three dimensional textures.

Velour Black.

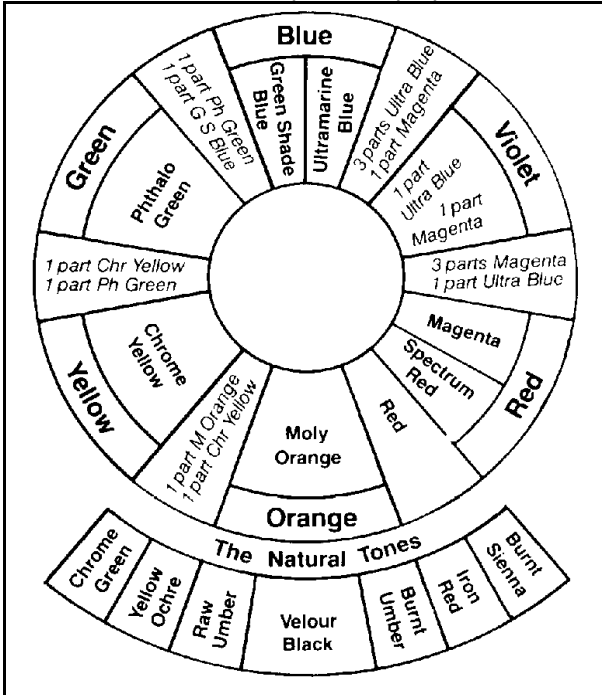
Velour Black is an intense, matte black, generally used at two parts water to one part paint for opaque coverage. As stage scenery is often placed within a black void, Velour Black is fundamental to the painting palette. Even scenic artists who prefer casein or dry pigment paint often use Roscopaint Velour Black for its permanent, velvet like finish.

Primary and Secondary Hues.

The minimum palette in any colour system would include black, white and the three primaries red, yellow and blue. From these colours, most other colours could be mixed. For convenience and economy, however, the availability of an intermediate range of colours is desirable. The full spectrum of primaries, secondaries and tertiaries is represented on the Roscowheel. A basic palette should include equivalently spaced spectral hues.

- a. Spectrum Red. A rich, primary red; a brilliant transparent colour when diluted.
- b. Moly Orange. A saturated colour, slightly on the red side of secondary orange.
- c. Chrome Yellow. Strong, brilliant yellow; the most intense, translucent colour.

- d. Phthalo Green. Excellent dark, primary green.
- e. Green Shade Blue. Dark blue on the green side; a brilliant transparent wash.
- f. Ultramarine Blue. A vibrant red blue; useful for mixing purples.
- g. Magenta. Red on the blue side; in combination with Ultramarine Blue, a powerful purple.



Earth Tones.

Earth tones are very important to the scenic artist. While these natural tones can be mixed from primaries and secondaries, factory mixed earth colours are less expensive. A selection of the most frequently used earth tones will complete the basic palette.

- a. Burnt Umber. Intense brown on the red side; an extremely rich wood tone.
- b. Raw Umber. A rich, cooler brown; the most useful brown colour.
- c. Yellow Ochre. Dark Value yellow; uses as flexible as wood tones and rich gold effects.

Additional Hues.

These colours can supplement the basic palette, providing greater flexibility in colour selection.

- a. Red. A highly saturated red orange.
- b. Chrome Green. A yellow green that retains great intensity when diluted; good foliage colour.
- c. Iron Red. A rich brown with a magenta tone.
- d. Burnt Sienna. A redder brown; valuable for toning bricks.

Gloss Medium.

Concentrated Gloss Medium is a PVA emulsion used to obtain a glossy surface. When mixed 1:1 with water, a satin finish can be applied over Rosco Supersaturated Paints. Gloss Medium can also be used as a binder for dry pigments or bronzing powders. A stain like effect can be created by combining Gloss Medium with aniline dye. As a

versatile binder and sealer, Gloss Medium is an important accessory for the contemporary scenic artist.

Painting with Supersaturated Roscopaint

Painting with Supersaturated Roscopaint demands no more painting skill than any other system. Add water, stir, and the colour is ready to be applied. However, certain characteristics should always be taken into consideration when planning the most economical use of the colours.

Since Roscopaint will not rot, colours can be mixed and used indefinitely. When storing colours for extended periods add some water over the paint and seal the container to prevent evaporation.

As Roscopaint is a permanent, waterproof paint, precautions should be taken with painting tools. Always clean brushes with water immediately after use. When spraying with acrylic paint, flush the equipment frequently with nozzle or lines. With normal care, Roscopaint will not damage painting equipment and the thinned colour will actually improve equipment operation.

Once the qualities of the system are understood, actual painting techniques are limited only by the imagination of the artist. Several textbooks describe specific techniques, Among the best are: Designing And Painting For The Theatre by Lynn Pecktal, Scenery For The Theatre By Burris-Meyer and Cole, and Scene Design And Stage Lighting by Parker and Smith. These textbooks furnish information about specific techniques such as spattering, scumbling and stencilling.

As these techniques are mastered, the role of the scenic artist becomes an analytical one. When reproducing a specific textural material, the artist must first observe the real surface. The various colours must be evaluated and organised into a logical progression of paint application. Textures must be translated into practical scene painting procedures.

Questions of opacity vs. translucency must be analysed in relation to potential surface conditions. When observing a woodgrain panel, for instance, some colours seem to recede and others seem more prominent. When scenically reproducing the woodgrain on muslin, the receding colours can be translucent, allowing the eye to "look through the surface". The dominant colours can be opaque, forcing the eye to stop at the surface.

After the analysis is completed, the colours can be mixed and the painting commenced. Stepping back from the work at frequent intervals will insure that painting techniques are "projecting out to the audience". When all surfaces are completely covered, the final step is to add compositional

accents. drawing focus to the most important physical elements.

The proper use of Roscopaint will insure a unified, richly finished final product. In one system, Supersaturated Roscopaint provides the flexibility of intense, relatively opaque colours and brilliant, translucent glazes. The colours adhere to virtually all scenic surfaces, and provide a resilient finish capable of with standing the rigorous demands of performance situations.

Roscopaint can be a complete system, or a complement to casein or dry pigment systems.

As a vinyl acrylic paint, Supersaturated Roscopaint is truly a system for the future, offering the scenic artist a medium for the unlimited expression of his craft.

Roscoflamex

- Flame Retardant Treatments

The prevention of fire hazards has become increasingly more important in the entertainment industry. No single fire retardant can effectively handle all the materials used in modern stagecraft. Rosco manufactures a range of products that offers a solution for all of the most common materials.

Roscoflamex Fire Retardants do not prevent a material from igniting and burning. The goal of fire retardant treatment is to retard ignition and slow the spread of fire. Roscoflamex products achieve this by creating an extinguishing effect. Roscoflamex lowers the ignition temperature of the treated material. When burned, it produces inert gases, which retard the production of oxygen, and develops a non-combustible char. Materials that have been successfully treated may ignite, but will self extinguish within two seconds after the flame has been withdrawn.

The chemicals used in Roscoflamex can only be effective when applied properly, and in sufficient quantities. However, the effectiveness of the treatment is not directly proportional to the amount of chemical added on to the material. Below a critical add-on level there is little or no flame retardancy. Adequate treatment requires an application of sufficient Roscoflamex to increase the fully dried weight of the sample by 10-20% is a typical add-on, the amount required for good flame retardant will vary with the composition of the material being treated. Always treat and test a sample first.

C26 Roscoflamex

A concentrated flame retardant effective on water absorbent natural fibre textiles, paper products, and Other cellulose materials. One gallon of Roscoflamex C26 mixes with up to 3 gallons water to yield up to 4 gallons of flame retardant solution. Roscoflamex C26 mixes with Iddings Deep colours, Supersaturated Roscopaint and Off Broadway, as well as most water based paints, to make an effective flame retardant paint.

S33 Roscoflamex

This ready to use, clear liquid effectively flameproof synthetic fabrics, such as polyester, nylon, acrylic and rayon, as well as many cotton/synthetic blends.

Not to be diluted.

Directions

? Examine Fabric - Soiled or starched fabrics should be cleaned before treatment to insure effective flameproofing. Allow extra fabric for shrinkage when treating cotton blends. Flame retardant treatment may stiffen fabric slightly or alter colour. Always test before using. Shake well before applying.

? Dilution - Roscoflamex S33 is used straight out of the Bottle. DO NOT DILUTE.

? Application

Immersion: This method insures the greatest saturation and is the recommended method for treating wood. Immerse wood for 2 hours in warm Roscoflamex W40 (100-160F) or 8 hours at room temperature.

Spraying: Spray 3 coats of warm Roscoflamex W40 (100-160F) uniformly to both sides of the wood using a hudson type sprayer. Allow at least 15 minutes between coats. Use a coarse nozzle. Clean sprayer thoroughly after use.

Brushing: Brush enough Roscoflamex W40 onto fabric to insure that material is wet. Allow at least 15 minutes between coats. Clean brushes thoroughly after use. Roscoflamex W40 will not change the colour of wood, however flameproofing may raise the grain of wood slightly. This can be corrected by sanding very lightly.

? Clean up - Rinse sprayer or brush thoroughly after treatment. Containers should be kept tightly closed in a cool, dry area. Do not transfer contents to another container. Clean up any spills immediately.

? Coverage - 100-200 square feet per gallon depending on weight of material treated.

W40 Roscoflamex

Hard to treat materials, such as wood, acoustical board, plywood, cellulose board, silk and wool may be effectively flameproofed with Roscoflamex W40. In addition to flameproofing, Roscoflamex W40 acts as a preservative maintaining the natural appearance of wood. **Not to be diluted.**

Directions

Shake well. Apply 3 coats of Roscoflamex W40 to dry, unfinished wood by immersing, spraying or brushing. Apply enough solution to insure that material is wet. Allow 15 minutes between coats.

? Application

Immersion: This method insures the greatest saturation and is the recommended method for treating fabrics.

Spraying: Spray 3 coats warm Roscoflamex W40 (100-160deg F) uniformly to both sides of wood using a hudson type sprayer. Allow at least 15 minutes between coats. Use a coarse nozzle.

Brushing: Brush enough Roscoflamex W40 onto wood to insure that material is wet. Allow at least 15 minutes between coats. Roscoflamex W40 will not change the colour of wood, however

flameproofing may raise the grain of wood slightly. This can be corrected by sanding the wood very lightly. Clean Brushes thoroughly after use.

- ? Clean up - Rinse sprayer or brush thoroughly after treatment. Containers should be kept tightly closed in a cool, dry area. Do not transfer contents to another container. Clean up any spills immediately.

Coverage - Wood, plywood: 110 square feet per gallon in 3 spray coats. Corrugated paper: 300 square feet per gallon. Acoustical tile and cellulosic board: 60 square feet per gallon in 3 spray coats.