

Blending Jane's Portrait Paints for Realistic Skin Tones

By Becky Syroka

"What color(s) should I use?"

If you are embarking on an original portrait project (based on your own photograph), this is a question you will ponder throughout each stage of your project. I believe this dilemma is one of the reasons so many paint exclusively from teacher studies...because the teacher outlines exactly what colors to use and in what order they are to be applied and fired. While teacher studies are wonderful learning tools, if you desire to paint your own original portraits (perhaps of family members), you will need to develop the ability to make these decisions independently.

Step #1

Learn to "see" details that are "hidden from the casual eye"

As you pursue your goal of painting portraits, you will find yourself fascinated with studying faces of people surrounding you. You will begin to notice interesting patterns of highlight and shadows which ebb and flow across the facial contours. You will notice how environmental factors as background, clothing, light sources, age, etc., all affect the colors we discern in a person's skin tones.

I'm going to use my painting of Kamryn as an example. Below is the actual photograph I used for my study:



2.

Please examine the photograph very carefully, focusing your attention on seeing the variations of COLOR on her skin. Do you see the yellow cast across the bridge of her nose? The orangey color of her chin in the reflected light? The dark blue/purple within the darkest shadows on her shoulder area? Do you see the various areas of blues and greens and pinks and purples in the shadows beneath and surrounding her left eye? Do you see the blotchy red areas of the palm of her hand and the green cast to areas of skin on her wrist and inner arm? How about the pinkish purple color on the tip of her nose? Did you notice the area (almost void of any color) where the bright sunlight flows onto her left shoulder?

Can I blend these colors from my portrait paints?

YES!! You can IF your paints are compatible with each other and IF you understand how your colors will look once they are fired.

I love the freedom to brush mix my colors when painting as I attempt to replicate the beautiful blends of skin tones I see in my photograph. I have personally had excellent success with brush mixing each of Jane's portrait colors. From my personal experience, her skin tone colors seem to be totally compatible with each other. This is the reason I personally use and wholeheartedly recommend her collection of portrait colors.

WHATEVER BRAND OF PAINT YOU PREFER TO USE (whether you use other brands of regular portrait paints or blend colors from your regular palette) the important thing is to know YOUR OWN paints and have tested their compatibility (to ensure one color will not "eat" another color).

Below is a photo of a test fire tile I created for myself which I've found useful. In most squares, I have applied pure color on the left side of the square (basic skin colors such as blonde flesh, reflected light, or warm shadow). Within each square, I have introduced (brush mixed with varying intensity from mid square flowing to the right edge of the square) other colors from my portrait palette to test the color when blended. Some mixtures were very successful, and others were not as attractive. But, now I can identify a blend from my test tile which comes close to the skin tone color I desire.

I present this tile simply as an example of a test fire tile which you might want to make for yourself using your own preferred paints. This photo is NOT intended as an accurate rendering of Jane's color paints since colors might vary significantly with your individual computer monitor. Most larger squares contain blended color combinations while smaller sections are representative fired samples of pure (unblended) paints. (The tile also contains a few colors in addition to Jane's brand)



4.

Here's the list identifying my color blends.

Each of the large squares is pure color on the left half of the square and then brush blended with a second color (gradually increasing the proportion of the second color as it blends to the right side) The smaller rectangles are simply fired examples of one pure color each.

Unless stated otherwise, paints are Jane Marcks brand.

This symbol ~ represents "blended with"

Row 1: Combinations with blonde flesh (BF) as the primary color (from left to right):

BF ~ Light Red

BF ~ Cool Shadow

BF ~ Rembrandt Green

BF ~ Warm Gray

BF ~ Tender Shadow (Rynnes)

BF ~ Violet #1 (brand unknown)

Warm Gray

Row 2: Blonde Flesh ~ Reflected Light

Reflected Light ~ Warm Shadow

Warm Shadow ~ Mahogany

Flesh #1 (entire square)

Flesh Shadow

Rembrandt Green

Cool Shadow

Tender Shadow (Rynnes)

Shadow Gray (San Do)

Row 3: Combinations with reflected light (RL) as the primary color

RL ~ Flesh Shadow

RL ~ Cool Shadow

RL ~ Rembrandt Green

RL ~ Warm Gray

RL ~ Tender Shadow (Rynnes)

RL ~ Violet #1 (brand unknown)

Mahogany

Row 4: Warm Shadow ~ Cool Shadow ~ Mahogany

Warm Shadow ~ Rembrandt Green ~ Mahogany

Tiffany Rose (Ann Cline)

Violet of Iron

Lori Pink

Violet #1 (brand unknown)

Light Red

Row 5: Transparency

Hair Brown (brand unknown)(a golden-orange brown)

Hair Brown

Rich Brown (Celee Evans)

Dark Brown

Descriptions of Jane's Colors "Though Becky's Eyes"

The "regular" skin tone colors are considered "warm" and are in the red/orange family. These include: **Blonde Flesh** (slight yellow cast when fired), **Reflected Light**, **Flesh#1**, **Warm Shadow**).

Some colors which I've blended together with them are considered "cool" or represent opposites on the color wheel, thus serving to "gray" down the warm red/orange colors. These include **Cool Shadow** (slightly greyed turquoise blue) and **Rembrandt Green** (warm brownish green). In some areas, I also use **Flesh Shadow** (yellowish cast), and I've also successfully blended the regular skin colors with **Warm Gray** and even **Violet** (any brand).

Mahogany is an invaluable color for achieving darkest value. It is a drab and lifeless brownish color alone, but if you add just a touch of Mahogany to another color, you will get a much darker value of the primary color. This is extremely useful for small areas of darkest darks (nostrils, deep ear crevices, etc.)

Jane's **Violet of Iron** is a pink version which I commonly use on lips (lightly applied for lip color or darkly applied for shading) and it also works well for shading skin in areas where you might normally choose warm shadow. Just another alternative for a slightly pinker skin tone.

Jane's **Light Red** is a beautiful clear color useful for lips and also useful included in skin tones (the red areas on ears, cheeks, etc.).

Transparency is my base hair color of choice (for blonde to medium brown hair). I never use yellow for a base coat as it easily gets too bright.

Jane's **Hair Brown** is a medium value brown (NOT golden or orangey)

Jane's **Dark Brown** is a true dark brown (NOT orangey) which I commonly use as a gray to shade the white of eyeballs. More natural- looking choice (rather than black) for many eyelashes.

Soft Rose is a gold pink which can safely be combined with skin tones. (Lori Pink is a beautiful pink ...great for lots of things.....but my experience is that it tends to fade my skin tones during firing so I do NOT combine Lori Pink with skin tones.)

Warm Gray is a perfect first wash for background if you are undecided about your choice of final color. It will block in your portrait silhouette without limiting your later choice of background.

Flesh Shadow and **Warm Gray** are unconventional choices, but I use both often to shade blonde hair (to achieve more of an "ash" blonde without the yellow cast.)

6.

In Conclusion

I must include one additional factor which I feel contributes greatly to color success. I always pre-coat (and fire) my porcelain with **PINK GLAZE** prior to tracing my portrait. Please refer to my [Product Information](#) page for information on the benefits and use of pink glaze. I am pleased to be a distributor of **Cherryl Meggs Pink Glaze** (available for sale on my [Supplies](#) page (lower portion of page)).

Below is my completed painting of Kamryn on which I've used many of the color blends discussed above. Perhaps you will now be better able to "see" these "blends". The key to success is:

Keep your color variations softly blended and **SUBTLE!**



If you have any questions, please feel free to [contact me](#).

Becky Syroka
Portraits on Porcelain
14420 Route 19
Cambridge Springs, PA 16403

WEBSITE: <http://beckysyroka.com>

Email: syrokab@aol.com

Phone: (814) 796-6421