

Old Color, New Love

Permanent Madder Deep and Royal Talens Rembrandt Oil Colors

By Terry Strickland

Before I began painting full-time, a dozen years ago or so, I was experimenting with various oil colors and found that my favorite brand was Rembrandt by Royal Talens. I was drawn to the finely ground and dense pigment load, the many transparent colors, and the workable consistency from color to color. For my painting style, these oils were perfect straight out of the tube; no need to complicate things by adding mediums.

In filling out my palette, I discovered that Rembrandt didn't carry one of my favorite colors, Alizarin Crimson. Instead, they made Permanent Madder Deep as a substitute for the fading, fugitive Alizarin. While I was willing to give it a shot, I wasn't sure what the color would do. I was pleasantly surprised.

It will darken reds without killing the chroma.

This cool, semi-transparent red is not as blue as Alizarin Crimson sometimes is. That's a positive quality because it can be added to other reds to darken them without destroying their high saturation or turning them too purple. This works beautifully for darkening Rembrandt Scarlet, my other go-to red. If I want a cooler red, I add a touch of a transparent blue like Ultramarine Blue Deep.

Pink and dark flesh tones are richer.

For figure and portrait work, I use it for mixing the pinkest areas of flesh, such as cheeks, tips of noses, lips, fingertips, knees and toes. Some reds lean more to orange than pink and that isn't what I'm after. I prefer it too, for darker skin tones, because it eliminates the chalkiness that other reds, like cadmiums can cause.

I also mix it with transparent browns and oxides and then use that mixture to modify flesh tones as they transition into the dark side of the form. This preserves the transparency in the shadows, which is what gives oil paintings their stained-glass glow.

It creates dramatic, never murky, pitch-black darks.

When Permanent Madder Deep is mixed in various combinations with other dark transparent colors, like Rembrandt's Phthalos, Blues, Greens, or Asphaltum, it's possible to create luminous, transparent darks that seem to punch a hole in the canvas, making it appear deeper than the surface of the painting.

Sure, I was skeptical at first, but the versatility of this color surprised me and is now completely indispensable!

~Terry Strickland, Feb, 2017