
ILLUSTRATING FUNGI — 3

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PAINTING FUNGI WITH GOUACHE — PART 1

Some readers may be unfamiliar with the name of **gouache paints**, so I will begin by explaining that these are watercolour paints, which are sold in tubes. Unlike pure watercolours, however, which are transparent, gouache paints are opaque. This gives them one outstanding advantage over watercolours — for they can be used on any colour paper in addition, of course, to white. If really dark coloured papers are used, such as bottle-green, it may be necessary to put more than one coat of colour on to cover the paper colour but it is still possible, whereas no amount of layers of pure watercolour would ever hide the colour of a dark paper, for the paper would always 'shine' through.

Gouache paints are mixed with water just like watercolours and they can also be *mixed with watercolours* which can be useful if you have a restricted palette of gouache colours. It is usual when painting in gouache to work from dark to light, which is the complete opposite of the watercolour technique, and in some ways this is an easier medium. Suppose, for example, that you wish to paint a picture of a Fly Agaric in gouache, you could put the red background colour all over the cap, and then when the paint is dry you could add the little white scales on top. This is rather easier than using watercolour, where you would have to apply the red coat first, taking care to leave flecks of white paper showing through where you want to show scales.

Mistakes in painting can often be corrected by the use of gouache paints. For example, if you overdo the painting of a white stipe and it comes out too grey — you could wait until the paint is quite dry (only a few minutes) and then apply another white coat. Incidentally, there are two types of white gouache available in art shops. **Zinc White** is best for mixing with other paints, whereas **Permanent White** is best used on its own where complete opacity is required.

Naturally, gouache paints can be used on any white watercolour paper, but for dramatic effect, try using a coloured paper. Those manufactured for pastel painters are perfectly acceptable although the **Ingres Papers** are on the thin side, and may buckle if your painting technique is rather wet. One excellent type of thicker paper is sold under the name **Canson**, and this is available in individual colours in sheet form or in pads, which have several useful colours in a book.

The painting illustrating this article was done in gouache on a grey Canson paper, and it features a group of Fly Agarics (*Amanita muscaria*) found growing under birch trees near some flooded gravel pits in Berkshire. They seemed an ideal group to portray in gouache, for I knew how attractive they would look on a coloured paper.

In the next issue of **The Mycologist**, I will discuss the variety of gouache colours available, and describe how to make the best choice of colours when confronted with this variety in an art shop.



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Hinton