



## Local Palettes

As the mercury rises, summer travel plans are penned in calendars and, with any luck, the plein-air painting equipment is dusted off in preparation for another excursion. Whether you are bidding a brief farewell to the riverbanks of Louisville for the coast of Laguna or exchanging SoHo for Hilo, it's time to give that trusty palette of colors a makeover to prepare for the upcoming change in scenery. This issue of Gamblin Studio Notes considers regionally-specific palettes of four plein-air painters as they capture the diversity of the American landscape.

### Polar Opposites

Working for a color company is the perfect antidote for living in the Pacific Northwest. It's no secret that we get more than our fair share of dark, gloomy days here. It keeps our coffee shops thriving and, come February, therapists practicing in Portland enjoy a spike in business. It was in such a climate that Robert Gamblin created the aptly-named [Portland Gray Light](#), [Portland Gray Medium](#), and [Portland Grey Deep](#).



Scott Gellatly, *Flooded Sky*

Capturing the subtleties of grays within the often oppressive skies of Western Oregon is a central theme of my work as a landscape painter. My personalized palette is tailored for this purpose:

[Titanium Zinc White](#) – a great general-purpose white with a bit more subtlety in mixing compared to Titanium alone.

[Indian Yellow](#) – a constant on my palette, no matter where I'm painting. Gamblin Indian Yellow is a highly transparent yellow/orange with a glowing yellow undertone, which it imparts to every other transparent color it is mixed with.

[Quinacridone Violet](#) – this color straddles the boundary between red and violet. Mixing it with Indian Yellow creates very interesting "burnt" oranges and reds, perfect for underpainting and glazing.

[Ultramarine Blue](#) – this warm blue is hard to live without. Mixing it with Indian Yellow creates deep, earthy

greens. However, the tints of this mixture are often too muted to achieve bright, opaque greens. When the sun breaks through the clouds to warm up the earth, [Cadmium Lemon](#) and [Viridian](#) (which Robert Gamblin artfully dubbed "conifer in a tube") are close at hand to round out the full potential of green.

[Van Dyke Brown](#) – a warm black whose tints create a warm "dove gray" for capturing advancing clouds.

[Chromatic Black](#) – this black, which is unique to the Gamblin line, is slightly cool in its tint and provides a great juxtaposition next to the warmer Van Dyke Brown.

On a recent trip to New Mexico, I was fortunate enough to squeeze in a few painting sessions between lecture demonstrations. New Mexico might as well be the polar opposite of Portland, so I came prepared with a few colors that were recommended as useful for painting the American Southwest.



Scott Gellatly, *Sandia Sunset*

[Perylene Red](#) – this modern-organic warm red is highly transparent and intense in its tint. As luck would have it, Perylene's tint perfectly captured the watermelon-like glow at sunset from which the Sandia Mountains got their name. Perylene Red, when influenced by Ultramarine Blue, is also useful for capturing the subtle violets of the Southwest's topography.



Scott Gellatly, *Tres Chimasos*

[Naples Yellow Hue](#) – this is useful as a "warm white" when painting in dry climates.

[Cobalt Green](#) – this unique green is incredibly muted in its tint. When coupled with [Cadmium Yellow Medium](#), it is invaluable when including the chamiso bushes that dot the local landscape.

### **Cool When Wet, Warm When Dry**

Morgan Samuel Price is a Florida-based painter who teaches plein air workshops throughout the United States. Her landscape palette consists of Titanium Zinc White, [Yellow Ochre](#), [Cerulean Blue](#), [Phthalo Turquoise](#), [Cobalt Blue](#), Ultramarine Blue, [Cadmium Yellow Light](#), [Hansa Yellow Medium](#), [Cadmium Yellow Deep](#), [Cadmium Red Light](#) and [Indian Red](#). Morgan's palette stays fairly consistent when she is painting in different locations, though the

proportions of colors used drastically changes to reflect the regional variations. To capture the bluish atmosphere of her native Florida, her palette tilts toward the turquoise, blues and greens. This shift is seen here as Morgan captures the lush vegetation of the Everglades.



Morgan Samuel Price, *Big Mike's*

This palette is often augmented by a number of modern-organic red pigments when plants flower their way into the composition. These include [Quinacridone Magenta](#), [Quinacridone Red](#), [Naphthol Red](#) and Perylene Red.



Morgan Samuel Price, *Jewel St.*

The cool blue-greens of Florida shift to more muted, warmer greens when Morgan is painting in the golden light of Southern California.



Morgan Samuel Price, *Laguna Wilderness*

To view more of Morgan's work and to find out about her workshop schedule, please visit [www.](#)

## East Coast Green, West Coast Green

When Michael Skalka is not spending time writing about art materials, working on art material standards for the American Society of Testing and Materials, or organizing an informational discussion/lecture for art students, he finds a bit of time to paint. With family spread around the country, Michael has the opportunity to paint on both coasts of the United States. His east and west coast palettes share the same foundation but have some striking differences. The color demands of painting landscapes in rural Maryland differ from those in California. "While the color of the light is different on each coast, it is even more important to render both the correct color of the vegetation as well as its structure." For one thing, the species of trees in the west and east are dramatically different. East coast landscapes are based on mixing enough green hues to create both contrast and interest in the deciduous foliage dominating that part of the country. West coast trees and brush are far lower in intensity by comparison to eastern trees; it is a drier, weathered, dusty look to foliage that pervades the southern California landscape.

His basic palette for painting both on the east and west coast includes Cadmium Yellow Light, Cadmium Lemon, Naples Yellow Hue, Cadmium Red, Ultramarine Blue, Cadmium Orange, [Ultramarine Violet](#) and Viridian. An alkyd white and Chromatic Black provide the ability to produce a wide variety of tints and tones. As a matter of convenience, Raw Umber, Yellow Ochre and Burnt Sienna as well as Transparent Earth Yellow and Orange are used to mute colors too high in intensity and to render dirt or rocks as well as to change the value of many green mixtures.

To extend the range of the palette for east coast painting, [Chromium Oxide Green](#) and Sap Green are modified with the addition of Cadmium Yellow and earth colors. Cadmium Yellow and Ultramarine Blue alone create fairly limited greens that need a boost in chroma to replicate the mood of foliage in the east; [Phthalo Green](#) used sparingly addresses that limitation. Sometimes [Permanent Green Light](#) is used to broaden the array of green hues.



Michael Skalka, *Evening at Perry's*

Michael's western paintings start with the same basic palette but draw on additional colors that make much of the foliage easier to render. [Olive Green](#) is used extensively while [Sap Green](#) is employed without much modification to create deep transparent passages. By adding black or combining it with Ultramarine Blue, Indian Yellow becomes a great base for creating an earthy, transparent green.





Michael Skalka, *Lagoon Evening*

"Painting in different geographical locations is a great learning experience that teaches the range of colors that can be mixed from the colors selected to be on one's palette."

Michael's blog, The Anatomy of Art Materials, can be found on the Artist's Magazine website at [www.artistsmagazine.com/artmaterials/](http://www.artistsmagazine.com/artmaterials/)

### Fall's Curtain Call

Another landscape painter and workshop instructor who paints throughout the United States is Elizabeth Tolley. Elizabeth gets inspiration from using a full spectrum of hues arranged on her palette. She enjoys the opportunities that arise from using such a wide range of colors, including the unpredictable color mixtures sparked by her settings. In this full palette are Cadmium Yellow Light, Cadmium Yellow Deep, Cadmium Orange, [Transparent Earth Yellow](#), [Transparent Earth Red](#), Cadmium Red Light or [Cadmium Red Medium](#), [Alizarin Permanent](#) or Quinacridone Magenta, Quinacridone Red, Ultramarine Blue, Cobalt Blue, Viridian, Sap Green and Chromatic Black. Elizabeth's palette is appropriate throughout the year as she paints the Central California coastline so central to her work. When adjusting her palette to paint in Maine in the fall, she relies on Cadmium Yellow Deep, Cadmium Yellow Light, Indian Yellow, [Transparent Orange](#) and Quinacridone Red. The warmth of these additional colors proves useful as fall drapes its fleeting hues like a curtain over Maine's landscape.



Elizabeth Tolley, *Hidden Pond*

To view more of Elizabeth Tolley's work and follow her workshop schedule, please visit [www.elizabethtolley.com](http://www.elizabethtolley.com).

As you pack your bags for your next painting excursion, consider those once-overlooked colors that may prove invaluable for capturing the unique characteristics of your destination. They can't help but spark your experience!



Elizabeth Tolley, *Spring Duck Brook* on location

If you have any regionally-specific colors that you have found useful in your painting, please feel free to [contact us](#). We look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

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