

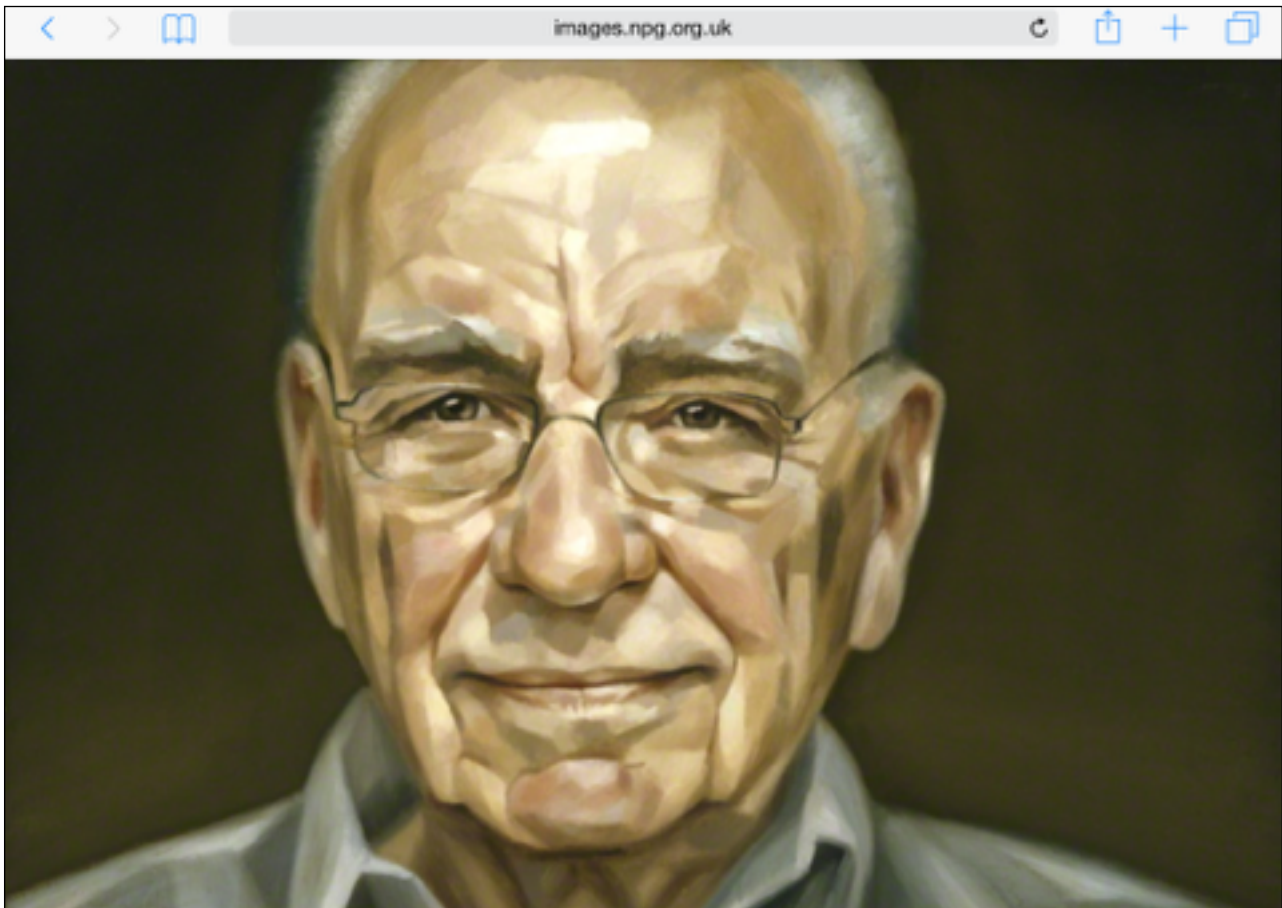
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# Skin tone colour Portraits

## Discovering colours to create skin tones

Notes for class, being inspired by the National Portrait Gallery

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Just exactly how do you paint skin colour? The answer is quite complex, firstly it depends on the person you are painting. Skin colours vary massively from one person to another, the man above has warm brown/yellow tones. The dark areas in the eyes and eyebrows are not black but mid darks. The highlights on his skin are warm whites not bright highlights. So, first up - count how many different colours you can see. This is quite difficult, I counted about 6. Now, count how many light, mid tones and dark tones you can see. This should be a little easier but it is a complex portrait! I am giving it an educated guess of 12 tones. This starts with the high light tones, mid light tone, dark light tone, light mid tone, mid tone and dark mid tone, light dark tone, mid dark tone and dark tone..... confused?

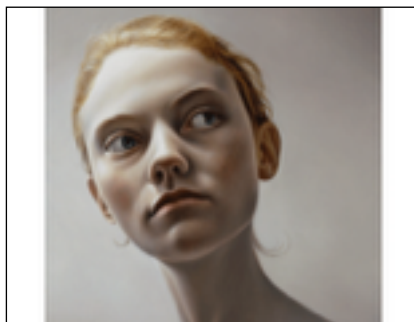
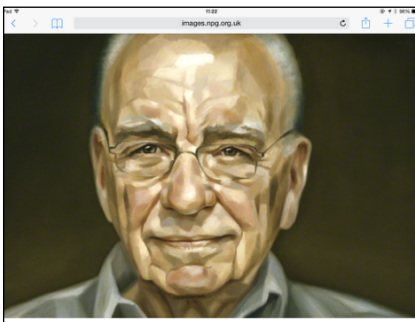
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# Using a palette of skin colours

## Basic starting out colours: Using a red, yellow, blue and white

- White, mixing white is good or white you may have
- Burnt Sienna
- Yellow Ochre
- Ultramarine Blue
- Cadmium Red

With the above colours you can experiment getting a range of



- creamy whites
- creamy soft yellow/browns
- light brown/yellow/soft tinge of red
- brown tinged with blue

Would this range of colours be suitable for the all of the above portraits? With practice you may be able to but it does depend on how you mix your colours and getting the lights and darks correct when using colour. What if you don't have the above colours? Try and get the basic colours of red, yellow, blue and white in other variations.

Exercise:

Gather your colours and lay them out on your mixing palette.

1. Take some white, now add a couple of blobs of yellow and burnt sienna to the white, mix. Each time, rather than mixing into the whole lot, mix to the side
2. See the strength of the colour. How light is it? Not sure? Paint onto a white surface
3. Add a little blue to the above, place next to your painted strip
4. Add a little more burnt sienna, place next to your painted strip
5. Keep adjusting by adding a little more yellow, blue and burnt sienna to the mix. Each time, rather than mixing into the whole lot, mix to the side

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## KEY POINTS:

By adding colour, *gradually*, you are learning the subtle colour changes. Adding blue will darken your mix.

By adding to the side of your original mix (easier with acrylics) you can start to learn how much colour you need to change one way or another.

## PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE!

Portrait painting and figure painting is demanding, it demands you see colour and make the decision to paint it. Lucien Freud, our most famous contemporary painter, devoted years to one single portrait before he declared it finished. :)

Finally, don't be put off if all of this seems a little advanced, we are only mixing paint here and there are lots of approaches to portraiture and applying paint. It is the emotion and feeling you put into your painting that also counts!