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## Difficult colors Part 2: White and Black

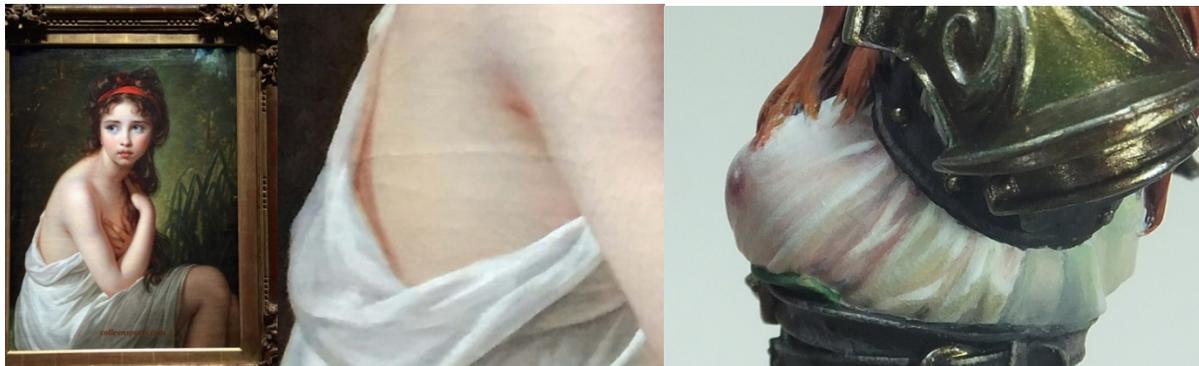
Erin Hartwell [corporea@yahoo.com](mailto:corporea@yahoo.com)

It seems that some colors are just plain hard to paint, be it because they require tricky highlights and shadows, or because they can be quickly overwhelmed by said shading. We'll cover ways to approach these colors and some tips and tricks to manage them! Fear not!

### White

White often looks dirty when over shaded. It can also be mistaken for the shade colors when the shadows are too prominent. Examples: looking gray, pink, blue, green etc. One way to combat this is to use creams or off white and to be certain to only use shadows sparingly. Most of the area should be "white" while the other colors take up comparatively small space.

Tricks: use off whites. Remember white is a reflective color, which means surrounding colors will show up in the shadows of a white object.



Color Choices: These will depend on whether or not you want a cool or a warm white. I use creamy ivory and linen white for warmer whites, and leather white and aquamarine blue for a cooler blue. Grays like aircraft gray or rainy gray as well as neutrals like driftwood brown are also good.

### Black

Black suffers on the opposite end of the spectrum when it is over-highlighted. Blacks can easily look gray or be mistaken for their highlight color. Again, using narrow highlights can help. Most of the space should be... you guessed it! Black.



Tricks: using desaturated blues and purples, using off blacks like walnut brown or nightshade purple.

Color choices: Solid Black or Pure Black, Nightshade purple, dark elf skin, aircraft gray. For a brownish black, use walnut brown and highlight using intense brown or chestnut gold. Dusky skin also works well as a highlight. For a blueish black, use nightmare black, frontier blue and snow shadow.

Step by Step using Arran Rabin



Step 1:

Basecoat with blonde hair and nightshade purple. Allow to dry. Then add a shadow of driftwood brown for the white and a highlight of dark elf skin for the black.

Step 2:

Next add a highlight of creamy ivory for the white and a highlight of a mix of dark elf skin and snow shadow of aircraft gray(will look grayer as a highlight than this.) Make sure the subsequent layers for the black are narrower. I left these unblended to help visualize the layers.

Step 3:

Next use linen white to add another layer of highlight for the white and plain snow shadow for the black. See how tiny the hint of the highlight is? Each layer should be narrower and take up less space, allowing the last to show through.



Step 4:

This shows a more finished version where the layers are blended. I also added a hint of pure white in the white section and used a bit of solid black in the deepest shadows for the black.

**Takehome:**

Overall, the key to working with difficult colors truly is patience. Choosing the placement of maximum shadow and maximum highlight can be more important with difficult colors. Make certain the color transitions are narrow and that the highest highlights and deepest shadows take up a small segment of the color real estate. Every fold of a cloak should not blend down to the maximum shadow, just like every ridge does not need to be highlighted up to the lightest color. Rushing and trying to skip too many gradations will make the results less realistic. Don't neglect the "off shades" like creams and off-blacks. They're a great way to deepen contrast for harder colors. Layering tends to be the easiest way to achieve smooth transitions.