

## The Right Brush for the Job

“A cheap brush is not inexpensive - it is cheap. Buying cheap brushes is one of the most common mistakes too many beginning painters make.”

Quote from: The Painter's Handbook (revised and expanded) Watson Gupitll 2006.

We often focus our attention on the glamorous world of paint and canvas. In reality, the brush is probably the most important tool an artist can purchase. So with that in mind our focus this month is on the brush and its many varied forms. By offering a 20% discount off all brushes we hope to encourage you to explore what we believe is New Zealand's most extensive brush offer.

## All About Brushes

There are many brushes to choose from, so start with a small selection initially. It will soon be apparent which brushes you need to purchase. All good natural hair artists brushes are hand made, so select your brush carefully - they will each be different.

### Hog/Bristle

For oil colour and acrylics. Bristle brushes are robust enough for use on abrasive surfaces like canvas and for scumbling; yet good quality bristle is soft enough to respond to delicate strokes. More expensive hog bristle brushes feature an interlocking of the hair that provides extra spring and longevity.

### Natural hair

The best brushes for watercolour and gouache are made from natural hair, usually red sable or squirrel, as this holds the greatest amount of fluid. Wet-on-wet oil painting techniques are best achieved with ox-hair, red sable or black sable hair brushes, as they will not disturb the underlying layer. Black sable is both robust and soft, combining the advantages of red sable and bristle. Soft natural hair brushes are too easily damaged for usual use with acrylic colour.

### Synthetic

Synthetic brushes are an excellent alternative to more expensive natural hair brushes. For acrylic colour, synthetic brushes are generally most suitable. They can be soft, for more delicate application of colour, or robust and springy for more impasto techniques. Synthetic brushes can be used for watercolour, but don't hold as much fluid as natural hair. The best synthetic brushes are made from mixed-fibres.



**Angular:** Bristle, Synthetic . Used for water colour, acrylic and decorative craft work.

Flat ferrule, short-length hairs, set with longer hairs at one end. Useful for precise strokes and for lines and curves, with thick or heavy colour. Also Dagger brushes used for pin striping.



**Bright:** Sable, bristle, synthetic. Used for oil, acrylic and decorative craft work.

Flat ferrule, short length hairs, usually set in a long handle. Width and length of brush head is about equal. Useful for short, controlled strokes, and with thick or heavy colour.



**Filbert:** sable, bristle, synthetic. Used for oil, acrylic and decorative craft work.

Thick, flat ferrule and oval shaped medium to long hairs. Long handles. With its soft rounded edges, the filbert is suitable for blending and figurative work. Cats tongue is a more spear shaped brush in small sizes with a short handle.



**Fan:** Bristle, sable, synthetic. Used for oil and acrylic.

Flat ferrule, spread hairs. Useful for smoothing and blending, special effects and textures. Comb brushes are a flat ended alternative to fan.



**Flat:** sable, bristle, synthetic. Used for all media.

Flat ferrule, square ended, with medium to long hairs. Provides lots of colour capacity and easy maneuverability. Use for bold, sweeping strokes or on edge for fine lines. Good with thick or heavy colour.



**Hake:** squirrel, goat. Used for water colour work.

A hake brush is an oriental-style wash brush on a long flat handle. It is useful for laying in large areas of water or colour, for wetting the surface and for absorbing excess media.



**Rigger/Lettering:** sable, synthetic. Used for ink and sign paint work.

Also known as an outliner. Round ferrule, square ended brush, with extra long hairs and a short handle. Large colour carrying capacity. Useful for delicate lettering, outlining and long continuous strokes.



**Pointed Wash:** Used for watercolour & dye work Oriental style pure squirrel comes to a fine point with large paint holding. Ferrule is usually wirebound called quill. Also available as a mop brush.



**One Stroke:** sable, synthetic. Used for oil, ink, decorative and sign paint work. Flat ferrule, square ended medium to long length hairs. Short handles. Large colour carrying capacity. Useful for painting block letters in a single stroke.



**Oval Wash:** squirrel, goat, synthetic. Used for watercolour work. Wash brushes come in varied shapes. The oval wash has rounded hairs, flat ferrules and produces a soft edge, with no point. A wash brush is useful for laying in large areas of water or colour, for wetting the surface, and for absorbing excess media. Mop wash also available.



**Round:** all hair, synthetic. Used by painters, designers and craftspeople. Round ferrule, round or pointed tip. Useful for detail, wash, fills and thin to thick lines. A pointed round is used for fine detail. A detailer is a pointed round with very short hair. Spotting brushes are usually 3x0 to 6x0. Sable 'points' best.



**Script/Liner:** sable, synthetic. Used for watercolour, decorative ink and sign paint work. Pointed, narrow brush with very long hair. Liners are shorter and narrower. Short handles, round ferrules. Large colour carrying capacity. Useful for delicate lettering, highlighting, outlining and long continuous strokes. Also referred to as a rigger.



**Stencil Brush:** Used for decorative craft. Round ferrule, short hog hairs used with dabbing motion for stencil work or stippled effects. Deerfoot is an angular version with more control.



**Square Wash:** squirrel, bristle, synthetic. Used for watercolour work. Wash brushes come in varied shapes. Varnish brushes also up to 150mm.

## Brush Care

Acrylic colour is the hardest on your brush. Care should be taken not to let the paint dry in the brush-head. Wipe the brush-head with a damp cloth, removing the bulk of the colour, rinse with water and thoroughly clean using da Vinci's special brush-cleaning soap and warm water. Rinse, shape the brush-head and lie flat to dry.

For oil colour, simply wipe excess paint from the brush head with linseed oil and a rag and clean using da Vinci brush-cleaning soap and warm water, working the lather from ferrule to tip paying special attention to pigment that sticks around the ferrule, until the lather is clean. Make sure all soap is rinsed from the brush head, shape it and lay it out to dry. Note there is no need to use turps when following this technique.

Brushes should not be left standing in a jar of water/turps, as this can irreparably damage the brush-head and wooden handle. When using acrylics, lay your brushes in a shallow water-filled dish while working. If you are leaving your oil painting brushes for a while dip them in linseed oil. Don't clean brushes with turps!

### We recommend using:

da Vinci Brush Soap Also available in a Tin Case:



## Spot The Difference

### Why pay for Quality?

The picture below left shows a No. 16 da Vinci handmade brush and right, a cheap No. 16 brush.

What is immediately noticeable is the difference in size. Compared with the cheaper brush, the da Vinci brush has a 50% wider painting edge. This is because there is no standardisation of brush sizes between manufacturers.

What is not visible to you is the interior of both products, which can only be seen by cutting open the ferrule:

The bristle used by da Vinci is nearly double in length, which takes up the entire space inside the ferrule between bristle and handle.

Only with such bristle length can you achieve the elasticity and springiness that a quality brush can deliver.

Why pay for quality? It's obvious once you know.

