

One of the advantages of painting with watercolor on gessoed paper is that you can lift dry paint back to a very light or white. However, you need to know how each pigment you intend to use lifts off a gessoed surface. In general, non-staining pigments will lift back to the white gesso, while staining pigments will leave a tint of their color on the gessoed surface. Below are some lifted colors - the top light stripe was lifted while the color was wet or camp, and the bottom light stripe was lifted with a camp brush after the paint was completely dry.



Test your own colors on a dry gessoed paper by painting a swatch of each color, lifting in one section while the color is wet, and then letting all the patches of color dry thoroughly, and then use a clean damp brush to lift a second area from the swatches. Note your results. Quinacridone colors are generally quite staining and will not lift back to white. Some of the natural mineral pigments don't lift well, while others do.

Remember that you don't have to put gesso everywhere on your paper - you can gesso and/or texture just parts of your paper, as I did below in this painting from my extensions series. I left the rectangular frame in the upper right area un-gessoed.

Mexican Primrose, watercolor on partially gessoed paper, image 11 x 15 inches, private collection, © Ellen A. Fountain



If you want to be able to recover whites by wiping off dry paint, you need non-staining pigments. Below are common non-staining pigments (from handprint.com). Some artists are still using some traditional fugitive non-staining pigments:

rose madder genuine and *aureolin* (yellow).

While these are beautiful colors when first put on paper, over time they will fade or undergo a color shift. I don't use them. However, I do use some of Daniel Smith's prima-tek pigment colors made from natural minerals. I like these specific colors because they are all transparent or semi-transparent and non-staining. They are:

amazonite genuine (green)

bronzite genuine (gold yellow)

lapis lazuli genuine (blue)

rhodonite genuine (slightly blue-biased red)

tiger's eye genuine (a yellow-ochre like hue)

All of these colors used on gessoed paper can be wiped off to the base gesso when dry, leaving no stain at all.

nonstaining pigments around the color wheel

1	light yellow	naples yellow	<u>(hue)</u>
2	deep yellow	raw sienna ^m magnesium ferrite yellow ochre burnt ^m yellow ochre ^m mars yellow ^m nickel dioxine yellow ^m	<u>PBr7-</u> <u>PBr11</u> <u>PR102-</u> <u>PY42-</u> <u>PY43-</u> <u>PY153-</u>
3	red orange	methin nickel complex	<u>PO65</u>
4	red	-	-
5	magenta	-	-
6	red violet	cobalt violet deep manganese violet ^m cobalt violet	<u>PV14</u> <u>PV16-</u> <u>PV49</u>
7	blue violet	-	-
8	middle blue	cobalt blue	<u>PB28</u>
9	cyan blue	manganese blue cerulean blue ^m	<u>PB33</u> <u>PB35-</u>
10	turquoise	-	-
11	blue green	viridian ^m	<u>PG18-</u>
12	yellow green	-	-
-	neutral	-	-

^m varies by paint manufacturer and type of paper used: see individual paint ratings for staining in the [guide to watercolor pigments](#), and tests of staining on specific watercolor papers in the [guide to watercolor papers](#)

earth compatible pigments around the color wheel

1	light yellow	raw umber nickel titanate	<u>PBr7</u> <u>PY53</u>
2	deep yellow	raw sienna chrome titanium oxide yellow ochre burnt gold ochre yellow ochre zinc magnesium ferrite	<u>PBr7</u> <u>PBr24</u> <u>PR102</u> <u>PY42</u> <u>PY43</u> <u>PY119</u>
3	red orange	van dyke brown burnt sienna burnt umber magnesium ferrite mars brown venetian red	<u>PBr6</u> <u>PBr7</u> <u>PBr7</u> <u>PBr11</u> <u>PR101</u> <u>PR101</u>
4	red	mars violet raw umber violet indian red perylene maroon	<u>PBr7</u> <u>PBr7</u> <u>PR101</u> <u>PR179</u>
5	magenta	thioindigo violet naphthamide maroon	<u>PR88</u> <u>PR171</u>
6	red violet	manganese violet cobalt violet	<u>PV16</u> <u>PV49</u>
7	blue violet	cobalt violet deep ultramarine violet ^m indanthrone blue	<u>PV14</u> <u>PV15-</u> <u>PB60</u>
8	middle blue	prussian blue cobalt blue	<u>PB27</u> <u>PB28</u>
9	cyan blue	manganese blue cerulean blue cerulean blue GS	<u>PB33</u> <u>PB35</u> <u>PB36</u>
10	turquoise	cobalt turquoise	<u>PB36</u>
11	blue green	viridian cobalt green pale cobalt green dark cobalt green BS	<u>PG18</u> <u>PG19</u> <u>PG26</u> <u>PG50</u>
12	yellow green	chromium oxide green cobalt green YS	<u>PG17</u> <u>PG50</u>
-	neutral	lamp black charcoal black magnetic black davy's gray chinese white buff titanium white	<u>PBk6</u> <u>PBk8</u> <u>PBk11</u> <u>PBk19</u> <u>PW4</u> <u>PW6</u>

^m varies by manufacturer

textured pigments around the color wheel

1	light yellow	azomethine nickel complex*	PG10
		cadmium yellow ^m	PY35-
		nickel titanium yellow	PY53
		azomethine copper complex*	PY117
2	deep yellow	raw sienna* ^m	PBr7-
		raw umber*	PBr7
		magnetic black	PBr11
		quinacridone gold*	PO49
		cadmium yellow ^m	PY35-
		yellow ochre* ^m	PY43-
		zinc magnesium ferrite	PY119
		nickel azo yellow*	PY150
3	red orange	van dyke brown	PBr6
		burnt sienna ^m	PBr7-
		burnt umber	PBr7
		permanent brown*	PBr25
		walnut brown*	PBr33
		translucent brown*	PBr41
		cadmium orange ^m	PO20-
		mars red	PR101
		cadmium scarlet ^m	PR108-
		perylene scarlet*	PR149
		disazo condensation red*	PR242
4	red	methin nickel complex*	PO65
		pyranthrone red deep*	PR216
5	magenta	quinacridone pink	PV42
6	red violet	cobalt violet deep	PV14
		manganese violet	PV16
		cobalt violet light	PV49
7	blue violet	ultramarine blue	PB29
		indanthrone blue*	PB60
		cobalt blue deep	PB73
		cobalt violet deep	PV14
		ultramarine violet	PV15
8	middle blue	prussian blue* ^m	PB27-
		cobalt blue ^m	PB28-
9	cyan blue	manganese blue	PB33
		cerulean blue	PB35
10	turquoise	cobalt turquoise	PB36
		cobalt teal blue	PG50
11	blue green	viridian	PG18
		cobalt green pale	PG19
		terre verte ^m	PG23-
		cobalt green deep	PG26
		cobalt green BS	PG50
12	yellow green	cobalt green YS	PG50
	neutral	vine black	PBk8
		ivory black	PBk9
		graphite gray	PBk10
		magnetic black	PBk11

^m varies by manufacturer: see the ratings of paint granulation or texture in the [guide to watercolor pigments](#)

The earth pigments and the textured pigments are also interesting to use on gessoed papers.

Earth pigments that are made from Iron oxides, cobalts and chromes/chromiums are generally non-staining, but how non-staining they are depends on the pigment particle size, and that is determined by the paint manufacturer. Earth pigments are best suited to tints and medium saturation passages - they aren't well suited to heavily saturated mixtures.

Textured pigments (also called granulating or flocculating pigments) are also quite appropriate for using on gessoed paper. The hills and valleys you create by texturing the gesso will naturally create places for the heavier granulating particles to settle into, accentuating the effect. Some of these pigments are transparent and non or slightly staining, so can be lifted when dry.

Watercolor on Gessoed Paper

If you want to be able to repeatedly lift dry color from gessoed paper, then you need to use the *least staining* colors you can. Here are some that are lightly staining from Daniel Smith. Many of these are from their Primetek line which are pigments made from ground minerals.

	<u>Staining</u>	<u>Transparent</u>	<u>Pigment</u>
YELLOWS			
Nickel Titanate Yellow	1	Semi	PY53
Nickel Azo Yellow	2	Yes	PY150
Verona Gold Ochre	1	Yes	PY43
French Ochre	1	Yes	PY43
Burgundy Yellow Ochre	1	Yes	PY43
Yellow Ochre	1	Semi	PY43
Transparent Yellow Oxide	1	Yes	PY42
REDS			
Rhodonite Genuine	2	Yes	Genuine Rhodonite
Red Fuchsite Genuine	1	Yes	Genuine Red Fuchsite
BLUES			
Smalt Genuine	1	Yes	Genuine Smalt
Cobalt Blue	2	Semi	PB28
Cerulean Blue	1	Semi	PB35
Lapis Lazuli Genuine	1	Semi	Genuine Lapis Lazuli
Azurite Genuine	1	Semi	Genuine Azurite
Kyanite Genuine	1	Yes	Genuine Kyanite
Cobalt Teal Blue	1	Semi	PG50
GREENS			
Viridian	1	Yes	PG18
Terre Verte	1	Yes	PG18+PBr7
Cobalt Green Pale	1	Yes	PG19
Fuchsite Genuine	1	Yes	Genuine Fuchsite
Green Apatite Genuine	2	Semi	Genuine Green Apatite
Amazonite Genuine	1	Yes	Genuine Amazonite
Rare Green Earth	1	Yes	Rare Green Earth
ORANGES			
Italian Burnt Sienna	1	Semi	PBr7
Sedona Genuine	1	Semi	Natural Iron Oxide
PURPLES			
Cobalt Violet	1	Yes	PV49
Ultramarine Red	1	Yes	PV15
Amethyst Genuine	2	Semi	Genuine Amethyst