

Colouring

11 January 2011

Spirit based

Spirit stains can be applied by paint brush, tissue paper or spray gun. The method described first in the following was demonstrated by Andrew Coe (January 2011). With spraying a better control over opacity and colour blending can be achieved but some form of spray gun is required. This may be a simple spray tube by mouth as demonstrated by Nick Ager at the Fakenham show 2010, or a more complicated setup with a compressor, as demonstrated by John Austin at Sandon Woodturners (January 2010).

Stain applied by brush or paper.

When final shape has been achieved sand the wood to 400 grid or finer depending on how coarse the grains are.

On coarse grained wood raise the fibres by spraying with methylated spirit and let it dry. If required burn the spirit off whilst it is still wet.

Again sand with fine grid, 400 or better and polish with tissue paper.

Apply the spirit stain as required, either by brush or by tissue paper. It is important to realise that especially on coarse grained wood the coloured stain may, due to capillary action, be drawn into the wood which in thin walled object will show on the other side. To achieve a subtle effect use the spirit stains diluted. Blend the different colours as required. Further blending is achieved by spraying again with methylated spirit.

When dry treat the surface with either oil or spray with acrylic lacquer, not cellulose based lacquer as this will dissolve the colour. Acrylic lacquer, being water based, will give an acceptable surface protection without dissolving the colours.

The bowl below was made by Andrew Coe.



Colour has just been applied



Colour has been blended and a white colour has been added on top



The finished bowl after oiling with Danish Oil



No colour has bled through to the inside.



Spirit stained and carefully polished with friction polish to provide blending.



Spirit stained and polished with gilt cream.



This bowl was painted in vivid colours using acrylic paint which included gilt colour. The paint was dapped on using tufts of kitchen paper.



This pot was initially sealed with sanding sealer, then coloured with diluted acrylic paint. A protective coat of acrylic lacquer was added, after which it was polished with a small amount of gilt cream. A thin coat of finishing oil was added on top of the polish which seemed to be compatible without disturbing the polish.



The apples and the oranges were coloured with acrylic paint with paint brushes being used to achieve the mottled effects on the apples. The banana was not coloured as the natural colour of the wood, Pau Amarello, provided the correct shade.

Polishing with Friction Polish.

This is possible with spirit stains but it must be realised that the friction polish which is based on shellac and spirit will dissolve and blend the colours . Very attractive blending coupled with an excellent polished finish is possible. However, as always it is advisable to try the method out on a test piece of the same wood before applying the polish on the final object.

Water based (Acrylic paints).

There are 2 ways this can be applied.

1. Colours can be applied directly to the wood in the same way as for spirit stains. But to raise the grains you need to use water which needs to dry before sanding to get an acceptable finish. The pigments in the acrylic colours tend to sit on the wood and do not penetrate into the wood as spirit stains do. It is difficult to get an even colouring if both side grain and end grain are coloured, as in the case of an ogee or curved shape. The end grains tend to absorb more colours than the side grain and therefore the end grain colours are normally darker than the side grain.

2. The second way to apply acrylic colours is to seal the wood with sanding sealer before the colours are applied.

However, it is more difficult to get the same blending of different colours than with spirit stains. Once the surface has been sanded and sealed the surface is wetted before the colours are applied to achieve blending of the different colours. This is the same as in water colouring. Colours can be applied by brush or by tissue paper.

Using diluted colours a subtle effect can be achieved, as shown on the pot on the previous page. This can be done in way that almost conceals the fact that the wood has been coloured and to make it look as if it is the natural colour of the wood.

The colours can also be used to completely cover the grain in the wood as on the fruits and the ball shaped bowl.

Finally a gilded sheen can be achieved by using a small amount of gilt cream before applying a final coat of wax. However, remember that the wax may remove some of the gilt cream, so it needs to be used sparingly. On coarse grained wood the effect of gilt cream can be very striking as it gets imbedded in the pores of the wood and enhances the natural grain structure.

Some examples of the effect of gilt cream are shown on the previous page.

Spraying.

It is of course possible to spray with acrylic paint in the same way as for spirit stain but the nature of the acrylic paints , being water based may pose some problems. Again experimentation is essential.

(All the examples on the previous page are by the author, whereas the the first page shows work demonstrated by Andrew Coe)