

MOTHER

Mother Colour Painting

Peer Teaching Workshop with
Heather Barker & Erin Dowd





Mary Cassatt

“Painter of Mothers, Was Not a Fan of Mother’s Day”

-Richard Whiddington

Born: May 22, 1844

Died: June 14, 1926 (age 82 years)

Cassatt was an American painter and printmaker. She was born in Pennsylvania, but lived much of her adult life in France, where she befriended Edgar Degas and exhibited with the Impressionists.



**Mary Cassatt, Maternal Caress (1896).
Courtesy Philadelphia Museum of Art.**



**Mary Cassatt, The Child's Bath (1893). Robert A.
Waller Fund. Courtesy the Art Institute of
Chicago.**



**Mary Cassatt, Woman with a Sunflower (1905).
Courtesy: National Gallery of Art.**

Theme:

MOTHER

Mother Colour

PEER TEACHING BRIEF

AIM

- Students will explore the theme *Mother* through photography, surface preparation and painting, to create a harmonious, refined "mother colour" palette. Student will develop the ability to apply line, colour, tone and harmony to painting.

Pre-Task Activity

- Take 1 photograph (in colour) responding to the theme.
- Upload the image into the shared google drive folder.
- Give the pdf or jpg a title with your name.

The photograph will be used as a primary source for the creation of a harmonious painting.

- Be confident.
- Choose subject matter wisely.
- Consider composition, tone and colour.

Theme Development: Mother

The theme *Mother* can be explored in expressive and imaginative ways, moving beyond the literal to embrace metaphor, memory and symbolism. Students might draw from personal experience, considering those who have offered care, protection or guidance, or from objects that embody nature. The maternal can also be understood through nature, with landscapes, seasons and natural cycles suggesting growth, shelter and destruction. Cultural origins such as birthplace, ancestry or mother tongue provide another lens, with historical and mythical figures, show the complexity of maternal identity. The absence or tension of motherhood, its push and pull between comfort and constraint, offers fertile ground for interpretation. Finally, abstract metaphor and symbolism, such as womb-like spaces, or colour harmonies that evoke warmth and protection, allow the maternal to be translated into poetic and visual form.

Materials List

- Photo in Google Docs
- Paint Brushes (variety of sizes)
- Acrylic Paint (variety of colours - B/W) Be Creative ;)
- Rags - recycled caps (for water)
- Apron or old t-shirt

Learning Content

AEDP: COLOUR, HARMONY

- Surface preparation:
 - Stretching paper.
 - Priming paper.
 - Creating a ground/Underpainting.
- Image transfer.
- Colour mixing: Create a harmonious (mother colour) palette.
- Painting techniques - brushstroke/layering



Paper Preparation



Word Bank:

Surfaces: Canvas, Paper, Wood, Fabric.

Gum Tape: Water-activated paper tape for securing paper to a board

Gesso: Primer applied to surfaces to create a smooth, paint-ready layer

Ground vs Surface:

- **Surface** = The support (canvas, paper, etc.)
- **Ground** = The preparatory layer (e.g., gesso) applied on the surface

Why is it important?

Paper preparation prevents warping, controls absorbency, and creates a stable, smooth surface for better paint application and durability. It's an essential part of a painter's practice, significantly enhancing the final result and giving the work a professional finish.

Stretching paper



- Fully saturate the page in a basin of water.
- Place the paper on a flat surface (large board/panel)
- Remove excess water with a sponge or towel.
- Stretch the paper: Gently pull the paper tightly over the surface and secure it with tape/ painter's tape along all four sides.
- Leave the paper to sit for a prolonged period (couple of hours/overnight).
- Cut the page away from the board with a blade knife and get painting!

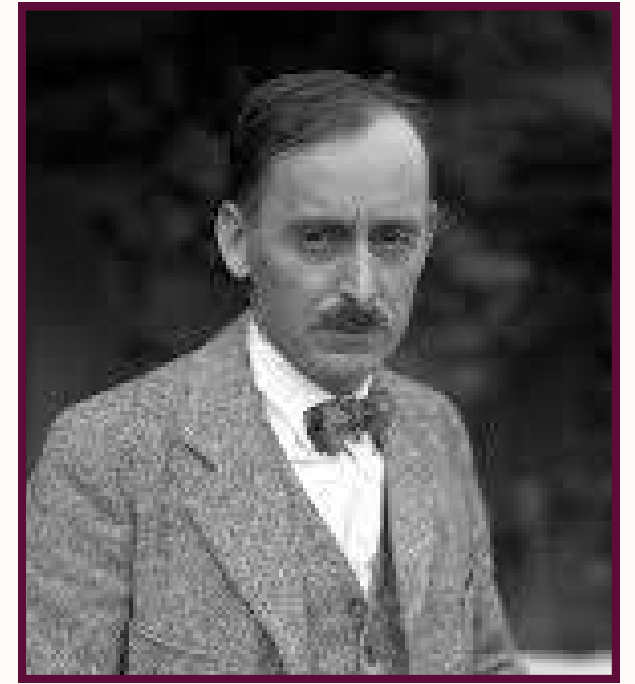
Image Transfer/Scaling up

- Place a clear acetate sheet with a printed or hand-drawn grid over the chosen image.
- On your larger drawing surface, draw a matching grid, increasing the size by the desired scale (e.g., if the acetate grid squares are 1 cm and you want the image twice as large, make the new squares 2 cm).
- The enlarged grid should cover the entire area where the scaled-up image will be drawn.



- Place the carbon paper face down on your drawing surface.
- Position your printed image on top of the carbon paper.
- Tape the image in place so it doesn't shift while you trace.
- Using a pen or pencil, trace over the lines of the image.
- Lift the image and carbon paper to reveal the transferred outline underneath.

Edgar Payne



Arizona Clouds (c. 1916, oil on canvas) is a large-scale painting showcasing Edgar Payne's sweeping brushwork and luminous handling of light to capture the drama of the desert sky.

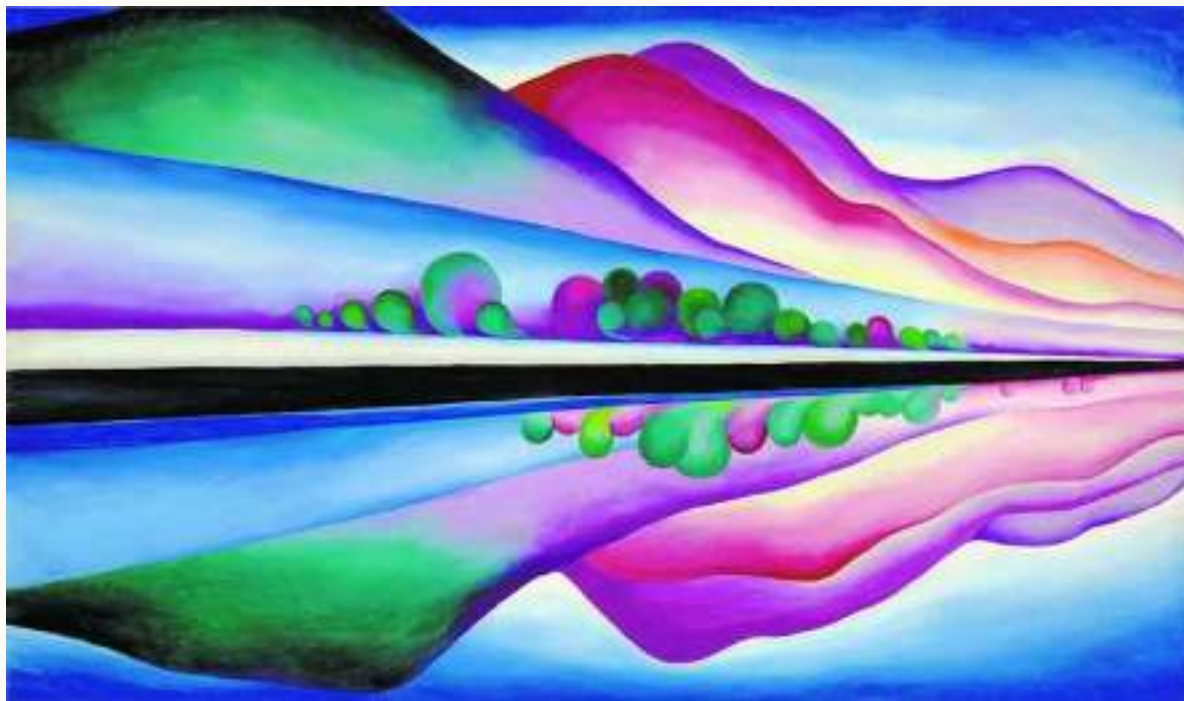
The term “**mother colour**” was coined by American landscape painter **Edgar Payne** to describe a method for achieving **colour harmony**. The technique involves mixing a **common colour into all other paints** on the palette, helping to unify different hues and create a **balanced, cohesive effect across the painting**. Although similar ideas about using shared tones for unity existed before him, Payne's explanation of the method made it widely understood and practised among artists.

Edgar Payne (1883–1947) was an American landscape painter known for his expressive depictions of the American Southwest, the Sierra Nevada, and the California coast. Born in Missouri and largely self-taught, he developed a **bold, gestural painting style** with a strong sense of composition and **light**. His Arizona Cloud Series and works from *The Scenic Journey* show his deep connection to the landscape and his ability to capture atmosphere and movement on a grand scale.

Georgia O'Keeffe

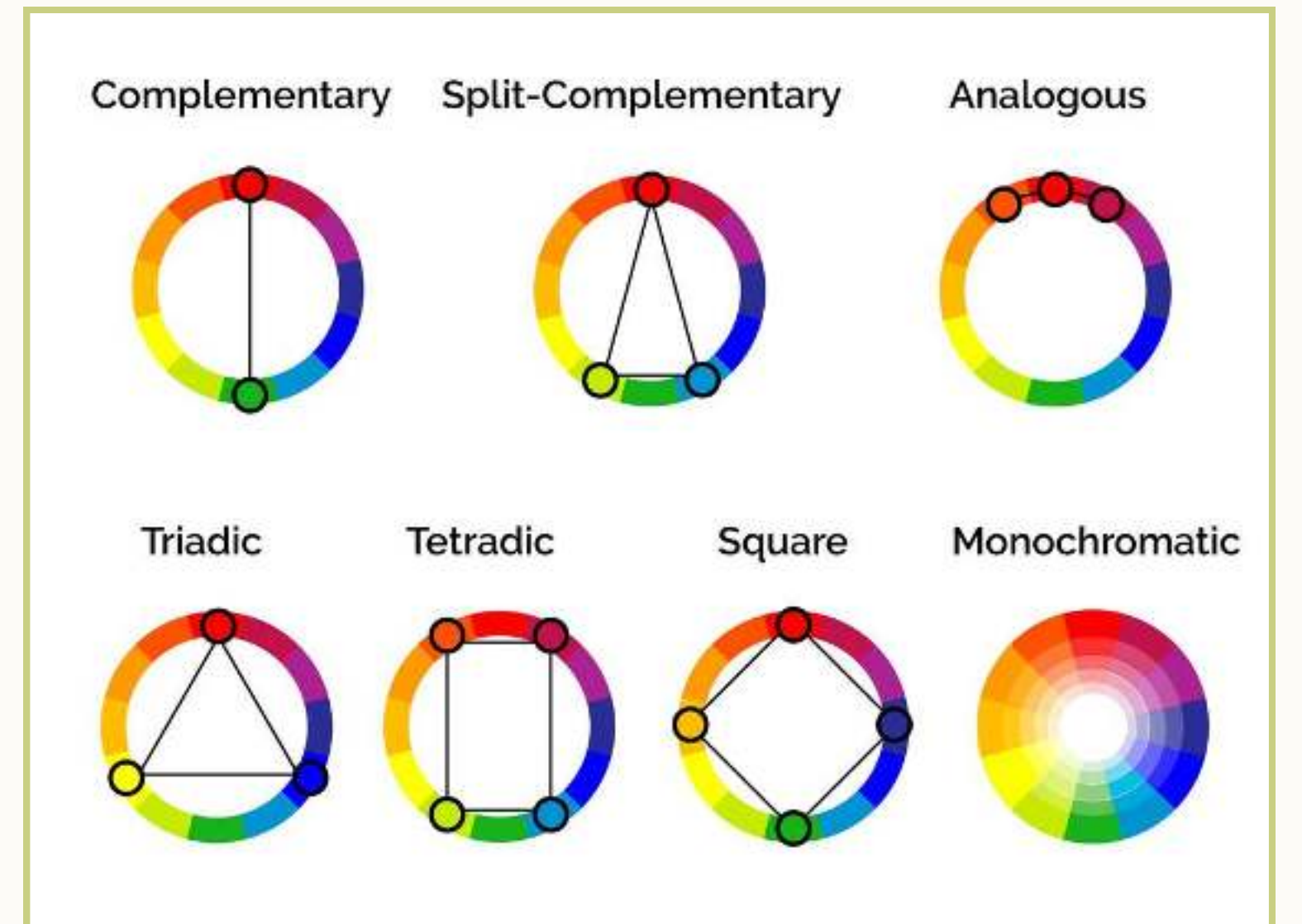
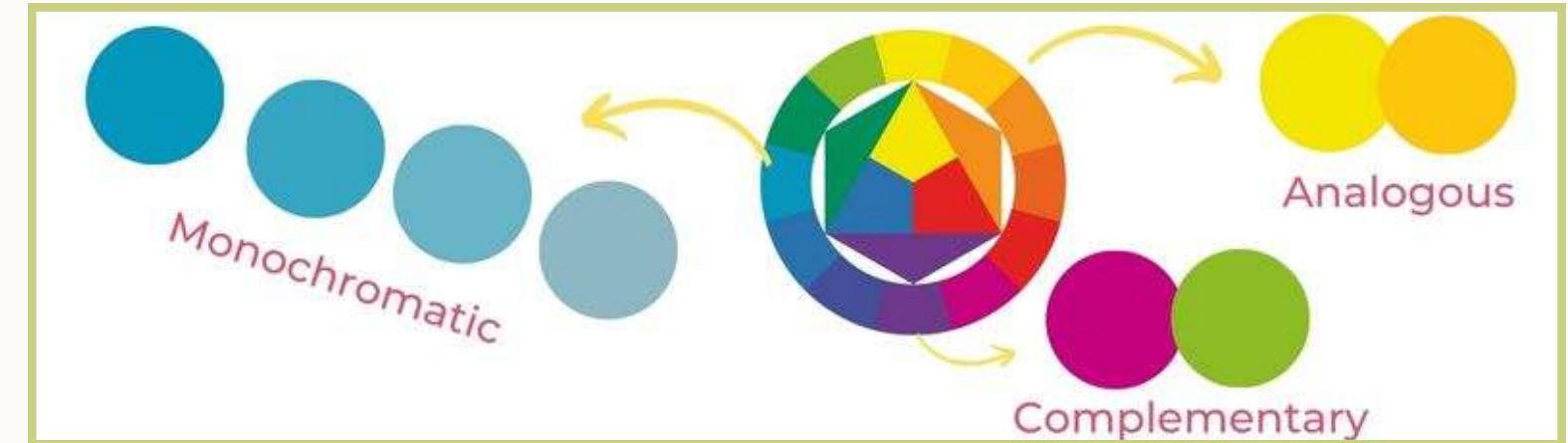


Georgia O'Keeffe, an influential force in the world of American modernism, is often regarded as one of the most innovative colourists of the 20th century. Her work, which seamlessly blends abstraction with the natural world, stands as a testament to her exceptional command of colour.

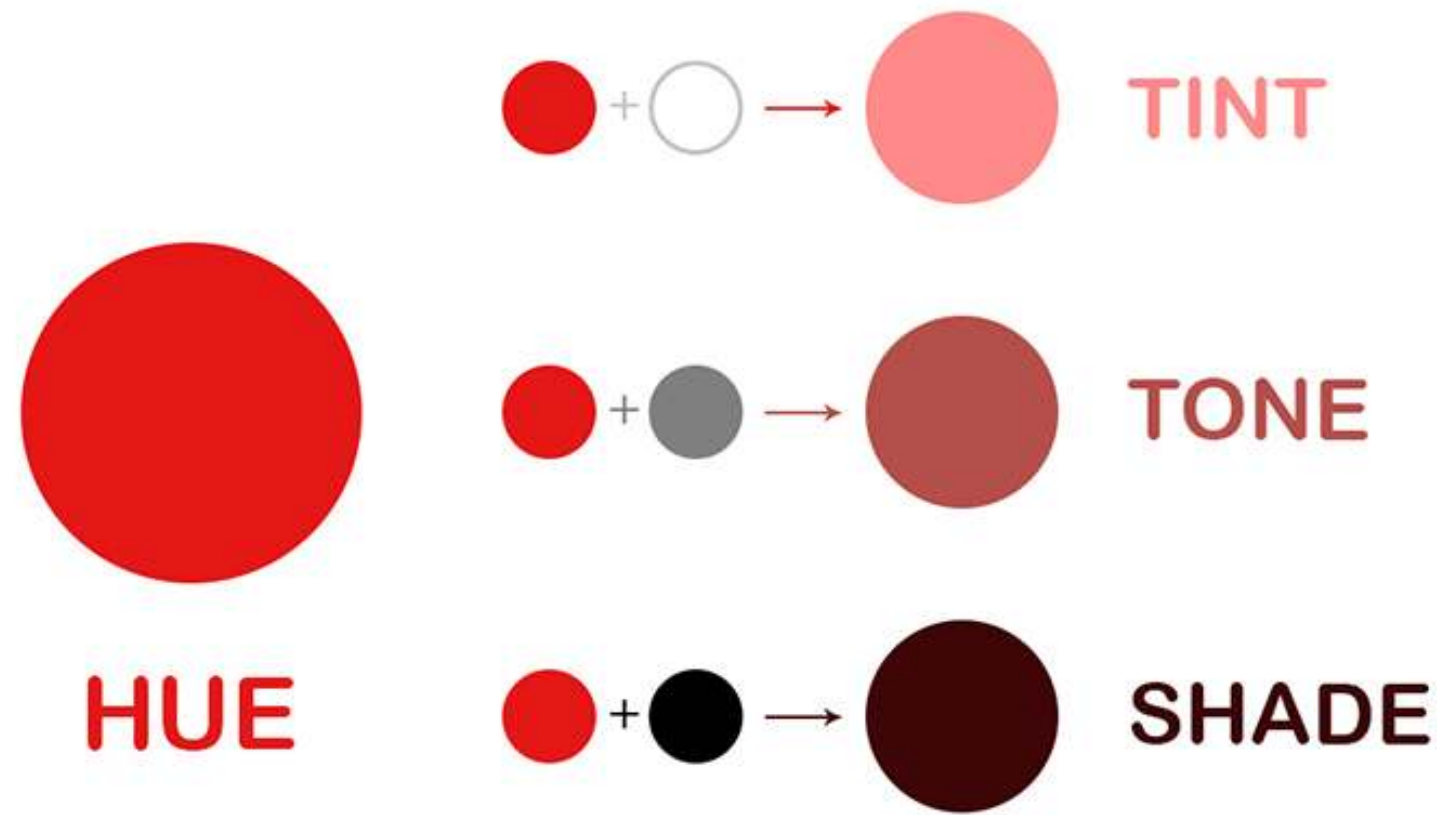


Harmony

Harmony in art is when different elements fit together well to create a unified, balanced image. It means everything in the artwork has a clear connection or flow, so the whole piece feels cohesive.



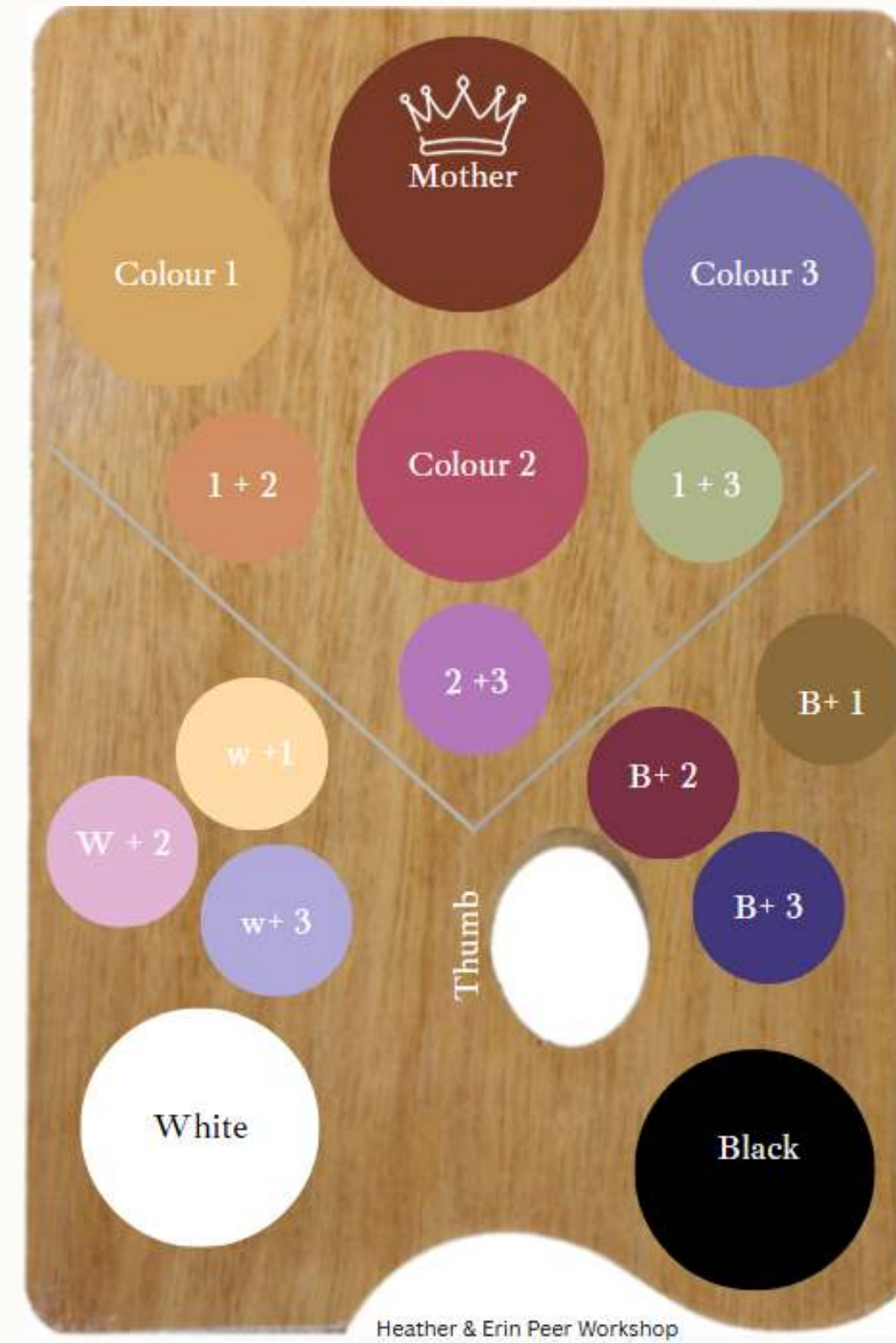
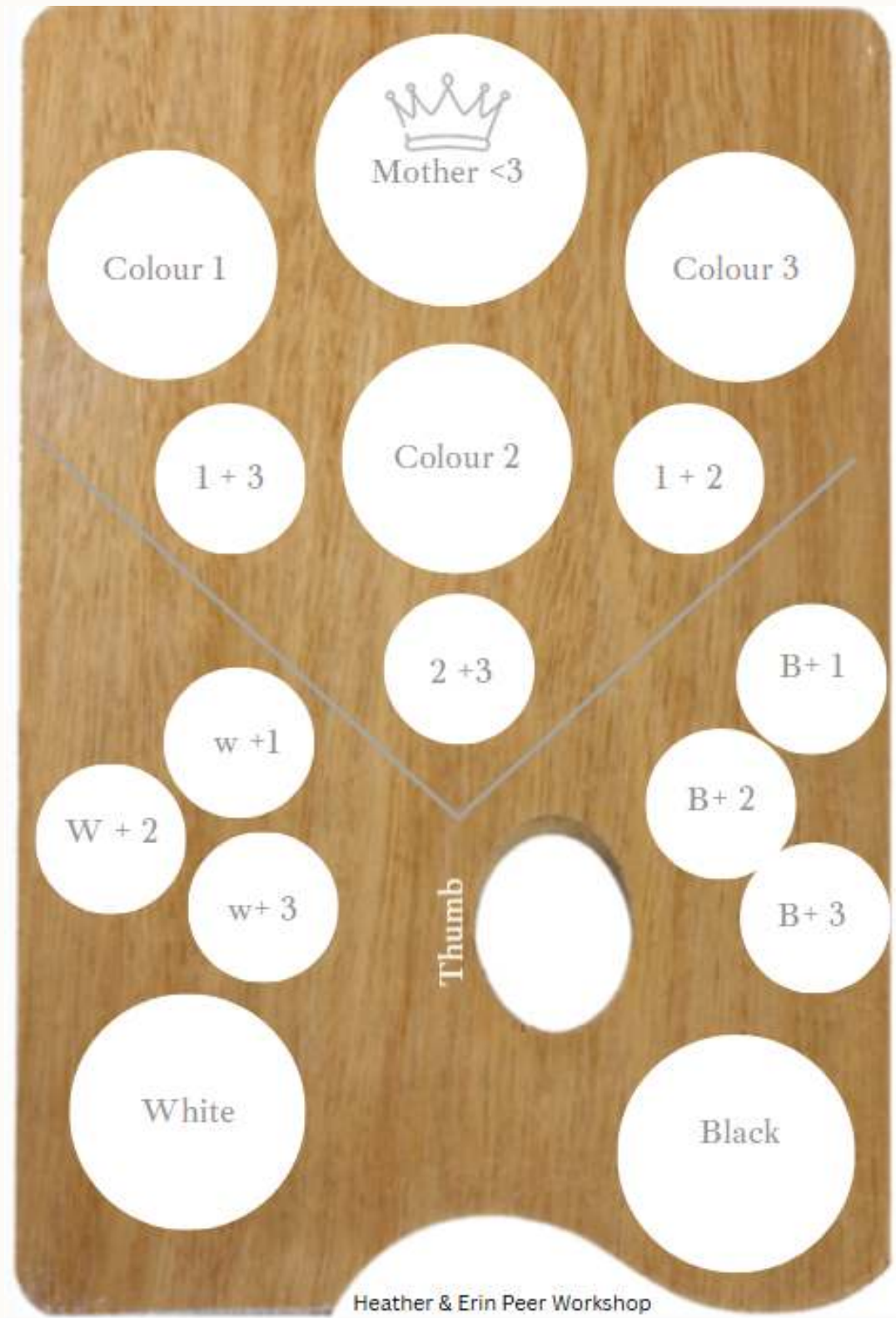
Tone



Understanding
the difference between

**TINTS, TONES,
SHADES & HUES**

Mother Colour Palette Template



The Palette



degas palette



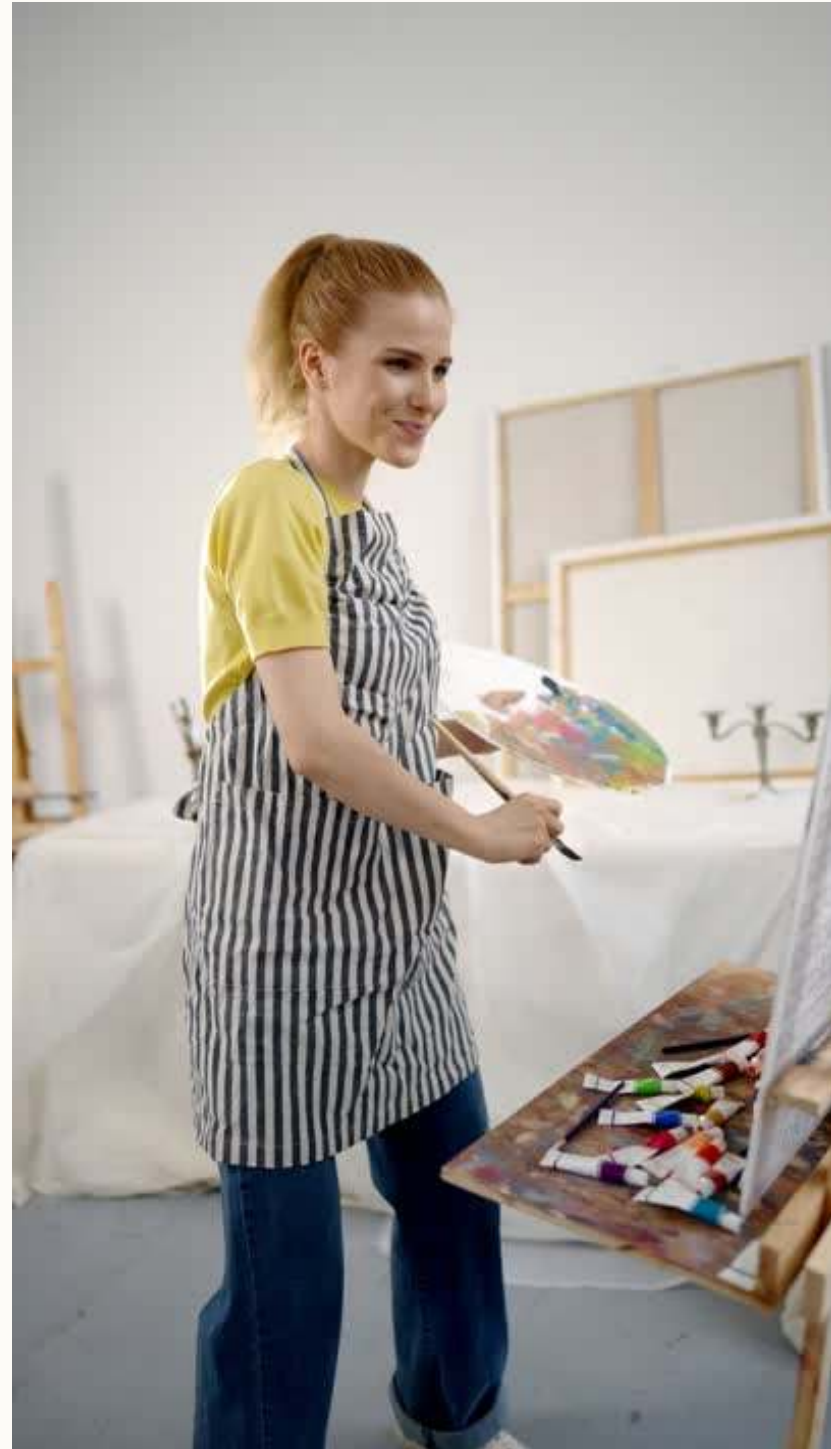
Recycled palette - still go in general waste!



Painting by my beautiful aunt,
Fiona Ryle "Mother" 2025



Why we are going to be standing for this painting...



Thank you Mama's,
Bye now

