

CHAPTER 11

The Blues & Greens

Another Swedish banner from Franzoia Serge. Nice example of shading turquoise blue.

Blue is a ubiquitous color used from antiquity since present days. A favorite color of ancient Egyptians, Greeks and later abundantly used in medieval and renaissance times. There isn't anything extraordinary in painting and shading blue hues. Usually a deeper blue can be used for shadows with some burnt umber for shadow variations.



It is advisable to shade blues with a lighter shade such as



turquoise but titanium white is also used by many painters.

Result is somewhat grayish in appearance so its better stick to turquoise or cerulean hue for highlighting. Prussian blue



and Winsor blue are 2 very useful colors but be careful when you re using them. They have tremendous tinting power and can overwhelm easily any other colors.

Konrad Schulte's Prussian officer of 1st Dragoon Rgt.. A 54mm own figure.

Peter Ferk's Lancer trumpeter. A 90mm figure by Quadriconcept.

Use them in small quantities adding just a hint of them in a strepped fashion. Prussian blue is a very opaque color, while Windsor blue is semi transparent. When using it, it is preferable if you undercoat with a similar color in enamels or acrylics . You should know that military blues usually have a greenish shade and they are usually dark with some exceptions, like for example the lancer trumpeter of the photo above. Straight prussian blue or with the addition of some ivory black can be used as the starting color for dark uniforms. Any shade of purple of deep violet could be used for shading, keeping ivory black only for the extreme shadows. Remember, black kills the brightness of colors. Any lighter blue like cerulean blue or some turquoise can be used for highlighting. Don't use white. Also keep your hand a bit when highlighting otherwise the finished uniform will look faded and worn, except from when you actually are after of this effect. Sometimes I like experiment with napples yellow, or some other similar color for highlighting blue. When done with minor quantities of yellow and slowly, the greenish cast of the highlighted areas look extremely convincing, with the very tips of the highlights with titanium white. Blue is a classic example of color with cool temperature, so it can be used to tint



other colors giving them a cooler appearance. For example, some controlled glazes with very thinned blue hues can give white tunics a cooler, somewhat bluish appearance. Remember also the picture of Detlef Belasch's bust from the chapter discussing whites.

Napoleonic Grenadiers, 30mm figures from Berliner Zinnfiguren. Unknown artist.

Observe that although nearly all figures wearing full blue clothing, with variation in the mixtures, there is a visual variation in the end result.

A Swedish banner in 30mm with a green flag with the royal emblem painted by Fanzoia Serge.

Green is not a primary color. It is produced when blue and yellow are mixed. In my mind there are 2 categories of greens. One is the brilliant all purpose greens we use for all eras and the other is the green



hues modern military uniforms tend to use as for camouflage. Usually my green mixtures are produced randomly without any specific formula. Have in mind though that if you use transparent blues and yellows then the green will also have the transparent quality, so for basic coloring it is advisable to use some more opaque blues and yellows. Try also oranges instead of

yellows. The red component in them will produce some quite unusual green hues which by the way have warm tones since red is warming the coolness of the blues.. When I am looking for some modern military green usually I start either from indigo or, and please don't scream from black. Yellow and black gives olive green tones and adjusting the black or by adding some blues all kinds of green grays can be produced. Shadows can be done with some deep tone of blue, for example Prussian blue or indigo. Try also different shades of red for shadowing. It's the complementary color of green and its a warm temperature color so it will give warmer shadows too. Highlight with any kind of yellow. Brilliant yellows like cadmium yellow will produce brilliant highlights, while napples yellow or similar will produce toned down highlights. Again, white should be avoided, except in cases we look for worn, faded results.



Above:

A rather unusual flat of some fantastic orce creature. Painter or the origin of flat is unfortunately unknown to me. It's a good example of olive green with excellent shading not only of green but of all details.



The Blue and Grey

Each painter/artist of miniature figures seems to have a "special" formula For military blue and grey. These two ubiquitous (at least in the U.S.) military colors vary widely in their appearance and in the field. For years I listened to all of these commentaries on the "special" or "only" formulas until my head was on overload. These goodies varied from Winsor Blue & Blue Black to Indigo, Prussian Blue or all of the above. I tried all or most of the graciously given nostrums for blue (grey, as follows, is another story!) but finally settled on one which is appealing to me, universal in application since dark (military) blue is dark blue, period; fading, etc., taken into consideration. But a glance at the original in museums, Smithsonian, West Point, Mueee de l'Armee (Paris), Fort Benning, etc., will show you that dark

uniform blue is almost a universal hue. It hardly varies, so why make it a project? I decided not to, and now am happy to share with you my own approach to the blue and the grey.

Dark Blue

Winsor (or Rembrandt) Blue is my base for dark blue. It is a copper phthalocyanine and semitransparent. Before I continue I must emphasize that in painting dark blue the undercoat is very important because of the semitransparent property of Winsor Blue (Rembrandt Blue is wholly transparent).

I use Polly-S Blue #500030 (medium dark) with Polly-S Black to darken to the value desired. It must be perfectly applied and no light or priming showing through as the transparency of Winsor Blue will pick this up immediately! To continue: to Winsor Blue I add blue-black (Winsor Newton) and in such amount as to achieve the value (darkness) of the hue desired.

Usually this is in the proportion of 2/3 blue to 1/3 blue-black. The control (blue/black) depends some-what on your taste. But realism can be achieved as appears above.

This is a very simplistic formula -- no need to combine indigos, blues, etc., etc., as nauseam. It is easy and simple to control. I would suggest you stay with a blue like Winsor since it has the "greenish" cast of military blue. Avoid blues such as permanent, cobalt, and manganese as these do not have the crispness or punch of Winsor Blue. To Highlight

Believe it -- some painters still use white to highlight dark blue (and other hues too). Without being redundant, as a generalism -- do NOT use white to

highlight. The effect is to wash out or "grey" the basic hue with a lifeless appearance. (There are some exceptions not relevant to this definitive article.) The best color I have found is a bluish green turquoise. This really gives a vibrant highlight effect. Or at least use plain Cerulean Blue. To get this turquoise color mix cadmium lemon (W/N) with Cerulean Blue plus white to bring it to the desired medium bluish-green color. You probably will have to add a bit more Cerulean to get the bluish cast. When applied wet-on-wet (highlight on a previous dark blue base still wet), the results are striking and vibrant.

To Shade

The color wheel suggests a violet as the shade color of dark blue. This one is tough, however, I have found through trial and error plus reading other artists' comments on shading dark blue, that a mix of Shiva Rose Red (in fact a dark magenta), which is very opaque and covers well, and Shiva Violet Deep (a dioxazine purple) keeping the mix toward the "red" hues, will give a deeper more in depth look to already dark blue. You might try "blocking in" this shade color rather than using the wet on wet method.

Sky Blue

No discussion on "The Blue and Grey" would be complete without a comment on sky blue, that ubiquitous but most elusive color seen in the military color wardrobe. For a base I start with a Cerulean Blue since sky blues always have a greenish ingredient, hence Cerulean. Add some of Payne's Grey as sky blue always has a bluish grey hue. Then bring the mix up with white to a medium light blue. The variation of "sky blue," as such, is as high as the sky, so be guided by color guides (plates, etc.) or better still

by direct observation of the real thing in museums.

To Highlight

Use Naples Yellow hot-spotted with white. The Naples Yellow precludes the white wash-out and gives a pleasing warmth.

To Shade

Use pure Winsor Blue for deep areas (or try Winsor Newton Blue Black) or pure Cerulean Blue.

Grey

I really do not know where to start on grey as there is as much variation here as any color imaginable. Also we include a discussion of butternut with this. Really the best approach is to be selective and limit this to the Confederate Grey, but again when one views the endless shades of this color in museums such as The Atlanta Historical Society and The Confederate Museum (Richmond) and even more gaze on the supply of on-the-rack coats hanging "in the back rooms" your mind switches to an immediate overload. So let's try to simplify this.

"Confederate Grey" started out as a color known as a "cadet grey," a bluish grey tone (per regulation), grey to be sure, but with a strong bluish cast to it. That should start us off, but individual officer's coats varied more often than not. Moreover, the "regulation" bluish grey was short lived (if in fact it ever existed) as the War progressed. So, in effect, any "grey" could be taken to be acceptable. There is no "right" color, so beware of the "experts" who want to sharpshoot your color selection.

As a base the easiest place to start is with commercially available Liquitex Grey around a value #6. This is close in value to Confederate grey. Shades

can vary with addition of small amounts of burnt umber or Payne's Grey. Many uniforms I've seen had an umber cast to them. The Payne's Grey gives the blue-grey cast. You can try adding a bit of Winsor Blue, but the strong tinting effect is obvious so be careful.

Another approach giving a warmer grey is to start with raw umber adding white plus Naples Yellow to the desired value - 5 or 6. Even a dab of burnt umber here is helpful as many Confederate greys being homespun and dyed had the brownish umber cast.

Highlighting

Generally this is achieved with Naples Yellow rather than white. Using this color you avoid the washed-out look and achieve some "snap" to the base color. In fact try highlighting all of your greys with Naples Yellow. Shading is much more mercurial. Avoid black for openers. As a theorem, avoid the use of black (some exceptions, of course) for shading as the result is a lifeless pit devoid of color. Try shading with burnt umber or Winsor Blue depending on your base color approach, warm (local production) or cadet grey (initial regulation). Or even a blend of the two (umber/W. Blue) will produce a very pleasing "black," one you can use without the numbing effect of say, Mars or Ivory Black, i.e., a commercial product.

I realize the above comments on "grey" are not as definitive as one might wish, however, the variety of color and immensity of the undertaking limit my approach. Moreover, I wish to keep the approach simplistic and serve both as a tarter and also as suggestions to try other greys by experimentation.

Butternut

Again, no color discussion of Confederate grey would be complete without addressing the ubiquitous hue of "butternut." If you want anything to be amorphous, vague or what have you, try to define "Confederate butternut." As the War Between the States progressed, dyes quickly vanished and clothing makers, often times rural in being, had to turn to dyes obtained from natural products achieved from boiling bark of trees, roots, etc., etc. Without trying to characterize the color (I can't) the result was a brownish, dull type of color with a value (light-dark ratio) spectrum which varied widely.

A suggested base color could be as follows: a mix of burnt umber (or start with a raw umber or a more grey base), raw sienna, white and Naples Yellow; to increase the chrome add a dab of terra rosa. That is about as far as I can go without refreshing my recollection with a hands-on viewing at some museum or its "back room" inventory. Try shading with a burnt umber or a brown madder alizarin for medium areas and Mars Violet or ultramarine blue in deep fold ` areas. Be careful with the dark blue as it is powerful on the base color. Highlight with Naples Yellow.

Conclusion

I hope this color discussion will broaden your perspective of these colors and induces you to experiment. Greys are fascinating colors and many variations can be made with thoughtful experimentation. Good luck and keep the paint

brush wet!



