



The Glazing Method: Painting Red

Here is an explanation of how one paints a bright red object, using the indirect method, i.e., a preparation followed by semi-transparent glazes.

The four steps, below, refer to the van Eyck red-turban illustration.

- 1 (top left). The red object must be drawn as a simple two-tone (light-dark) silhouette.
- 2 (top right). The shadows are then painted a flat, bright dark red—Persian red, with some Cadmium Red mixed in for increased chroma—but the lights are left the light colour of the canvas. The shadow line is softened, as needed, using a drybrush.
- 3 (bottom left). When the shadow colour is thoroughly dry, one or two coats of a red semi-transparent glaze are painted over the light shapes of the red object (each coat being allowed to dry before the subsequent coat is applied). Opaque pigments can be used, as long as they are not diluted with a lot of medium: the paint is scrubbed on thinly, using a big brush, and the coat of paint slops over, beyond the outlines. This slop-over is then either wiped off, or painted out later. The glaze can also be applied over the shadow area, if the shadow colour will benefit from an increased chroma and the sense of opalescence that goes with a lighter-over-darker scumble. The colour of the first coat of semi-transparent red glaze is exploratory and only approximate—it is the second coat that defines the colour exactly, and that colour must be the colour of the *lightest* lights—this is very important, as a glazed area cannot be easily lightened.
- 4 (bottom right). The darks are next brought to a finish, using a mixture of alizarin crimson and black. This will look like a dirty dark purple on the palette, but when painted over the red preparation (step 2) it will look like a dark red, modelled lighter here and darker there, all within the shadow-family range of values. Finally, the lights are rendered, using high-chroma, dark reds that are applied almost as a drybrush (rather like working with a red charcoal on a red paper, so to speak). The key to this, as with all representational painting, is to simplify. One must take great care not to let any of the lights become too dark—when this happens, the area must be repainted with opaque white, and the whole process gone through again!!!