

Free tutorial for using the Special Care Nursery (SCN) Air dry reborn painting.

By Gill Wilkinson.



Welcome to the tutorial on using the Special Care Nursery reborn painting starter set. Please take a moment to read this first part which explains a little about it 😊:)

I am initially posting it as a folder of photographs - each showing a step in the process. Each photo will have a brief description followed by a more detailed one. The brief description could be enough as the whole tutorial is a guide only - everyone develops their own way, this is how art works!

I do advise reading the whole thing but it isn't necessary - if you are having problems with a particular stage you can always go back and read in more detail.

The theory behind the range of colours is also explained as they are based around the real colours of the anatomical layers in real flesh and skin (they look very strange but they do work! It is all explained as we go along!)

I will publish as I go but please be patient - I am very slow when I paint and I need to add the text to each stage too.

Once finished, I will put it all together in a flowing tutorial on the website - the album on here is a 'WIP' but you will hopefully be able to follow it.

Have fun!

Warmest hugs,

Gill x x



What you will need:-

A clean work-surface - I now use puppy training pads as they have a waterproof back and absorbant surface - you can use plastic tablecloth or similar covered with kitchen towel.

Your vinyl kit! I am using the fantastic Serenity kit by Laura Lee Eagles for this tutorial 😊



A starter set of Special Care Nursey (SCN) ready mixed paints for rebornng.

http://www.specialcarenursery.co.uk/ourshop/prod_2956215-Special-Care-Nursery-Air-dry-paints-1-beginner-set.html

SCN distilled water thinners with added bonding medium (ready mixed available) You can manage without these possibly but advisable to have them.

(*See note below.)

Something to clean the kit with - VITAL!! I will go into more detail about this later but the BEST option is ISOPROPANOL (acohol solution - readily available from ebay in 70% strength and 99.9% strength - I use 99.9% strength - make sure you get the correct strength for best results.)

As a last resort you can use washing up liquid but this is not as effective and can lead to problems painting if not cleaned properly.

A selection of paint brushes. (NOT previously used for oils.)

A palette or saucer.

Cosmetic sponges.

Tweezers.

Kitchen towel. (Preferably lint free).

Vinyl gloves.

Drying rack or mug tree.

A bowl/glass/pot of tap water or distilled water and a bowl/glass/pot of SCN thinners.

Matte and satin varnish (gloss varnish optional).

Colour wheel - possibly optional with the starter set but recommended when more advanced.
There are other optional extras but I will mention them as and when we need them.

*I have two tubs on my table - one with plain water and one with thinners.

I rinse out my brushes and sponges in water first to clean them then I do a final rinse in the thinners to ensure I have the right amount/correct ratio of bonding medium on my brush when I dip it in the paint again.

There is the same ratio of bonding medium to paint in the paints AND the thinners. Adding thinners to the paint keeps that balance. If you are only washing brushes and sponges in water, this reduces the amount of bonding medium in the mix. It is not essential but advisable to use the thinners for your final rinse 😊



Prerparation of the vinyl kit

This is the most important stage by far. Our SCN range of paints are designed to stick permanently to a vinyl surface and they do. If you have problems with them sticking it is absolutely due to oil/grease on the surface of the kit. No other reason. It doesn't take long but is ESSENTIAL.

The best way to clean is by adding some Isopropyl to a cosmetic sponge and wiping all over the vinyl surface paying particular attention to creases, finger, toes etc.

The sponge will look pretty grimy when you are done. Repeat with a clean sponge until no grime is left. (Then clean once more for good measure!)

The alcohol solution is the same as that used in hospitals for wiping mattresses and medical equipment - there are briefly fumes as the alcohol evaporates but it soon passes. If you are particularly sensitive you could try ETHYL ALCOHOL (ETHANOL) which apparently is more easily tolerated.

I have been a severe asthma sufferer and was not faring well with the fumes from Bob Ross thinners but I am fine with isopropyl in the small quantities needed.

Washing up liquid is a final resort - if you have severe allergies or breathing problems this may be the safest method but it is time consuming to use it effectively. It is vital that all residue is removed after cleaning or it will act as though it has never been cleaned at all. Washing up liquid residue gives the same problems as grease.

Apply neat washing up liquid to the vinyl parts and massage in all over.

Rinse in clean warm water - rinse again.

Now take a clean/new nail brush and scrub vigorously whilst still wet - then rinse again. Repeat scrubbing action to all parts and rinse once more.

Allow to dry thoroughly - if possible try not to get any water inside the limbs but if you do make sure they dry out properly to ensure there is no future mold growth once finished.

If the first coat of paint is not adhering properly you need to repeat the cleaning process again!



The sponge on the left shows how dirty the vinyl was after cleaning even though it looked fine! They are sponges from the same pack 😞



Excuse my old palette but I love it! Before I throw the dirty sponge away I also clean around my palette to remove grime, dust, hairs etc. before using it.



Getting Started

Now the fun part! Time to paint!!

Use green wash and blue wash to neutralise the vinyl.

The first stage is to make your vinyl the neutral colour of almost 'dead' flesh. This is a pale almost grey/blue hint and is the first stage in creating a realistic look in your artwork.

Most vinyl has a pink or orange tinge - you may think it looks like flesh already but failing to neutralise might be the difference in a realistic 'baby look' or a 'pretty doll' look.

I use a colour wheel to decide which shades to use more of - to use one match up the vinyl to the colour wheel and see which colour is directly opposite on the wheel.

In this case, the vinyl used to make Serenity is already quite neutral. It is slightly more orange than pink. As there is little orange the mint wash (opposite to pink on the wheel) will actually make little difference - we will see this shortly. However, the blue will have more of an effect as it is opposite the orange tinge that is applicable to this vinyl.

When starting out you can safely use a layer of mint and a layer of blue without getting too complicated - the accuracy of it will come in time. All the colours can be mixed and matched but initially you will be fine using them as they are. I will explain colour mixing in an advanced tutorial at a later date.



Applying the Washes

Starting with Mint wash, mix the bottle properly. The pigments will sink to the bottom and need to be mixed in fully before it is the correct consistency. I find it is better not to shake but to roll in your hands (like making a sausage with clay 😊:D) and to rotate in a 'right way up - upside down - right way up' continuous motion.



Hold the bottle upside down and look at the base - if it isn't clear and there are still pigments sitting there - mix some more until it is clear. The first mix is always the hardest as it has been settled for the longest. It gets easier as the bottle empties too.



Prepare the sponge by using tweezers to pluck around the edges - this softens the applications preventing straight edges of paint.

Dip the sponge in your thinners (best option) or water and squeeze out until nearly dry.

Add some paint to your palette and dip a large brush - load the sponge by applying your brush to the surface, adding the paint. Blot gently on your worksurface pad or kitchen towel and then GENTLY dab your vinyl with the sponge moving it around each time you dab/stamp. When the paint is fading - re-load as before with your paintbrush, blot and continue.

I also add paint to any areas missed (like folds and creases) with the brush used to load the sponge and blot out any excess with the sponge 'corners' or a mop brush.

Allow to dry. I always do head first, then legs, then arms - any order will do as long as you continue to paint in the same order which allows equal drying time.

Alternatively you can paint the wash on and use your cosmetic sponge to work out the brush strokes and to blot excess paint.



Before painting I always stick a large piece of parcel tape, doubled back on itself, on the work surface. It provides an upward facing sticky surface - I use this periodically to dab my sponges and brushes on to remove any lint/dust/hairs etc. Replace as necessary.



I also like to use a fan brush to make sure there is no pooling of paint in the folds, creases and dips. A mop brush will do the same job nicely.



As there was very little pink in the kit, there is barely any difference after adding a few layers of mint wash but it has eradicated what little there was and provided a great base.



The paint is touch dry in around 10 minutes and the next layer can be added then. The next colour is blue which neutralises the orange in the vinyl - again, make sure it is mixed well and apply in the same way.



One coat of blue and we can already see a difference - the kit on the left is the one being painted and it is losing the orange tinge.

Like I mentioned earlier the aim of the mint and blue neutralising washes is to reduce the vinyl to an almost 'dead flesh' grey/blue colour (which sounds awful but it is the colour of a new born baby before it takes a first breath and this is the realism we need to achieve to then build up a real looking baby colour as we add in the 'oxygenated colours' of real, healthy baby flesh.

The colours in this set are based around this concept of replicating real baby flesh/skin 😊:)

I will give it one more coat after applying the veins.



The next step I do is to add the veins.

This stage can be done later but I prefer to do it early as they are naturally deep in real flesh, I prefer to build the other layers on top.

As I have said before though, with your growing experience as an artist you will find your own way - my way is not the 'right way' it simply is just 'my way'. 😊



There are lots of information about where real veins lie on the internet. For realism it could help to look at these and to look at real baby pictures - for now I will use my arm as a quick guide!!

As you can hopefully see, the veins on my forearm (which are not the best!!) are quite wide and subtle. Veins run deeper in the flesh than capillaries and are blue because there is little or no oxygen in them. The closer to the heart they are, the bigger they are. They are quite large in your head and torso, still large in the upper arms and legs but becoming smaller the further down the arms and legs you go.



Here in my wrist where the arm is thinner, they are obviously closer to the surface (as there is less of me there!) and they are getting smaller.

This gives you a rough guide when painting them about how thick or thin your strokes need to be for realism.



I add some of the veins (after mixing well again) to my palette and also a small amount of thinners next to it. I also often add a touch of thinning medium although it is not essential (explanation below)

Make sure you have a cosmetic sponge at hand. If you have a spare vinyl limb maybe play on there first. All blue pigments are dark and intense so I usually use a diluted version to make my first veins. I go over them again slightly darker when I am happy with the placing and soften by dabbing with a sponge or mop brush as I go. LESS is always better - it takes time to add more but it spoils it if you overdo it.

I always make mine fairly subtle - if it needs more at a later date it is easily done once the foundation veins are there. If you have beading issues, the paint will behave better if you add a touch of thinning medium to it. Thinning medium dilutes the colour like thinners do but gives a more creamy constancy rather than a watery one.



I have added the veins to the belly plate and once dry I add another layer or 2 of the blue wash which helps to set them and blend them in.

It is also done to bring the whole of the vinyl to that 'dead flesh' colour I explained before 😊)

I also add some veins to the head and across the bridge of the nose.



Here are the veins on the limb. (Difficult to see!) They are thicker as they move up from the feet to the upper leg. The same technique is used for the arms.

I use one of our long bristle hair painting brushes for this - a 0 or a 1 usually. I use only the fine point when veining the lower limbs but apply more pressure and hold the brush at a closer angle up the limb to widen the stroke.



At this stage I could begin pigmenting but I usually add the first layer of creases. If I'm honest, after adding a couple of layers of blue wash I get bored of adding washes and am ready for a bit of detailing!! 😊:D

The pigment layers will wait for now!!

I mix and add a touch of creases to the palette - I use it undiluted but if you are struggling to apply it subtly you can add some thinners.

You need the tiniest amount on your brush and then you still need to blot. You want to aim to add a hint of colour - not fill in the whole crease with paint.

I paint several creases with an almost 'empty' brush. I also blot with a cosmetic sponge and soften with a fan brush as I go.

It is always better to build many very subtle layers which really will look more realistic.

If it is bleeding or forming beads or globules you have too much paint on your brush.

Also it could be (as often is with me!!) you have not de-greased in the creases well enough and there is oil residue left.

You can 'paint' in the creases with your cleaning alcohol and brush it out to dry with a clean dry brush. 😊:) If beading issues continue, the paint will behave better if you add a touch of thinning medium to it. Thinning medium dilutes the colour like thinners do but gives a more creamy consistency rather than a watery one.



Here is how it looks with a first coat of the creases - very subtle.

It is all about 'shading' rather than painting. You want the finished baby to look real - not painted. This sounds strange but the thicker the paint, the less real it will look.

Again, you can add extra layers later on if they are needed.

I also start the nipples with some creases paint at this stage. They do not need to be overly accurate as you will build on them and they will be more subtle once you add the mottling layers. 😊



As well as the creases I add a base coat to the lips and the inner ears. I also add a layer behind the ears, in the nostrils and around the nose.



You can see the difference in colour more obviously now with the unpainted one!

It seems like there is not much happening - but it is!!

This one looks quite unhealthy at this stage, but that is what we want - honestly!! 😊:D

Once again, apologies for the quality of these photos!! They are done on the phone and poor lighting 😞