

## **Materiality in Art Ghost Ranch**

Tutor: Nicki Heenan

The purpose of this workshop is to expand your knowledge of materials and to explore new ways of application. The aim is to develop a dialogue of self-expression under guidance of scientific process and tactile experience.

In Immanuel Kant's words,  
"Experience without theory is blind, but theory without experience is mere intellectual play."

### **DAY 1 - 22 SEPTEMBER – Introduction to process and documentation**

SCIENCE IDENTIFICATION CRITERIA or THE CHARACTERISTICS OF SCIENCE Six Criteria of Science: Consistent, Observable, Natural, Predictable, Testable, and Tentative. The sequence is not important, but the acronym "CONPTT" makes a good long term memory hook.

Task: describe your process areas of strengths and weakness

How does this apply to landscape painting?

For those who are intellectually curious to consider a new type of education - that offered both by Nature and by their fellow human-beings: introduction to the course materials

## **Casein, Watercolour making**

By developing surfaces and grounds you can manipulate the way watermedia can be used to create textures, forms and also make a platform for adding collage. I use heavy Watercolor paper, multi media board and Yupo paper.

The study and use of natural pigments adds authenticity of place and enhances the sense of materiality within a painting. You can either process your own pigments by collecting and refining or buy commercial pigments that are sourced from specific locations. Most modern paints are a mixture of minerals and dyes to enhance the brightness and consistency but by using natural pigments there is an element of surprise in every painting.

A simple way to make these materials while travelling and a demonstration on building layers

### **To make watercolour:**

To make gum Arabic: Mix 2 tsp (approx. 6g) of gum arabic powder with 4 tsp (approx. 20g) of cold water. Add 1 tsp (approx. 5g) of glycerine and stir well. Leave in the fridge overnight to allow the gum arabic to completely dissolve in the water. This will make enough binder to make at least 6 half pans of watercolour.

Or there are commercial preparations available.

## **Day 2 - 23 SEPTEMBER - Imagination and Intellect**

Nature was important to Wordsworth from his earliest years, as it fuelled his vivid imagination. Some of the most striking memories he would describe in *The Prelude* are of experiences he had as a child, when his impressionable mind was awe-struck, and sometimes even afraid of his surroundings. In Book I he tells of a night-time boat trip he once took which left

him shaken, thinking 'grave and serious thoughts... for many days' (lines 416-18):

I dipp'd my oars into the silent Lake,  
And, as I rose upon the stroke, my Boat  
Went heaving through the water, like a Swan;  
When from behind the craggy Steep, till then  
The bound of the horizon, a huge Cliff,  
As if with voluntary power instinct,  
Uprear'd its head. (lines 402-8)

That Cliff, he writes, seemed to follow him 'like a living thing'.  
He rowed away 'With trembling hands' and was haunted  
afterwards both day and night by such forms moving slowly  
through his mind.

The idea that viewing landscape is through the lens of what you  
know and understand landscape to be like.

To quote T.S Elliot

**“We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all  
our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know  
the place for the first time.”**

Collection and harvesting materials from our surroundings,  
documenting in tactile ways making a sensory series of  
drawings in response to the surrounding Mesas.

## **DAY 3 - 24 SEPTEMBER**

How materials reflect the actual landscape both through the material and imagined

The act of looking a little deeper into the landscape – the struggles and stories of the hedgerows

Making Ink and foraging – using locally collected plants and making a communal ink

### **basic homemade ink recipe:**

1. Put your foraged/natural materials in the saucepan and cover well with water.
2. Add a teaspoon of salt and a teaspoon of white vinegar.
3. Bring to boil and simmer very gently on your lowest setting.
4. Cook for at least an hour, but longer cooking times will bring a deeper more intense colour.

Digging deeper into the science of making materials. Alchemy – working with binders, solutions and substrates

Many of these processes will take a few days to develop and I will provide some ready-made materials for you. Explore how this responds to different surfaces

### **WORKING WITH YUPO AND PVC COATED PAPER**

Step 1: First, seal and prime paper to stop any warping and to provide a surface for adherence using a layer of pigment in binder forms a coloured ground. I also use ink directly to Yupo but prefer PVC coated paper for this.

Step 2: Using loose marks and wet ink – work with the materials to create flow and texture.

Step 3: Refine the composition using squeegees, rollers and damp cloths. You can wipe back to the white paper at any time or build up layers.



Method – quick landscape studies using the blot method –

**Cozens devised a method of drawing a 'blot' with ink and a broad brush.** This had to be done rapidly and without too much conscious thought. The 'blot' would then be used as the basis for an invented landscape: any contours suggestive of trees, hills and mountains would be traced and used to create a new composition.



INKS – property of inks  
Staining, transparent or opaque  
Reaction with granulation medium  
Ink prints from laser printer

BINDERS – Gum Arabic, PVA, Matt Medium

Ink is a free and fluid medium. Having a sensitivity to its natural state just like water, we think differently about its application and meaning.

## **DAY 4 – 25 SEPTEMBER**

### **Working with dry pigments**

Making pastels and grinding and binding

Gum tragacanth 1:32 water

Soap flakes (to help bind or a little glycerine)

Calcium carbonate and talc ratio 50:50 pigment

Sometimes alcohol to help hydrolyse the pigment





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**We may have made pastels earlier in the week depending on the weather, if not we shall make them in this session.**

Respect for the land and how we take pigments from nature are part of our considerations towards making art. The precious resource and physical properties of ochres that are mostly found in this area are plentiful and varied in colour.

**DAY 6 – 27 SEPTEMBER**



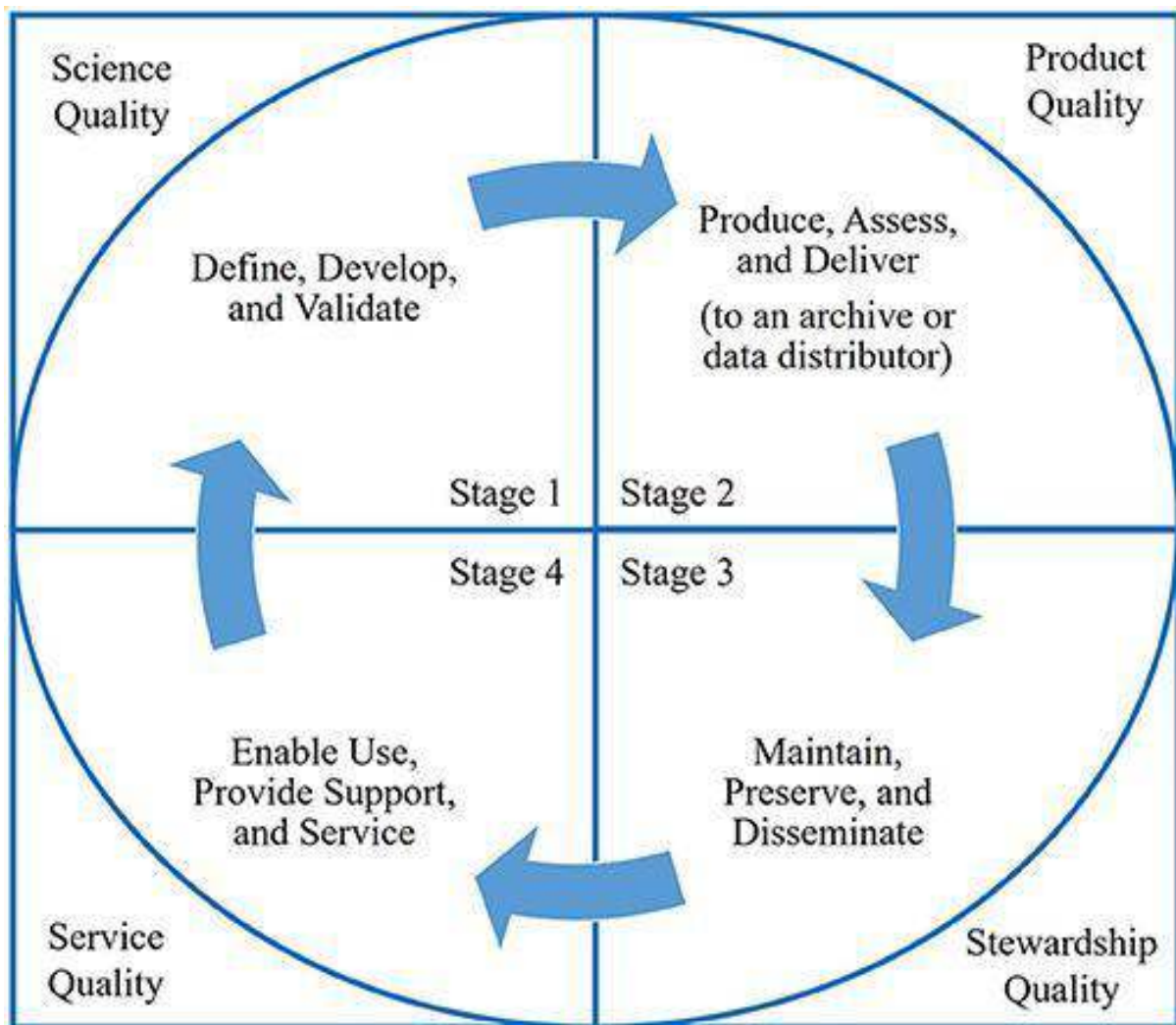
## **GROUP DISCUSSION**

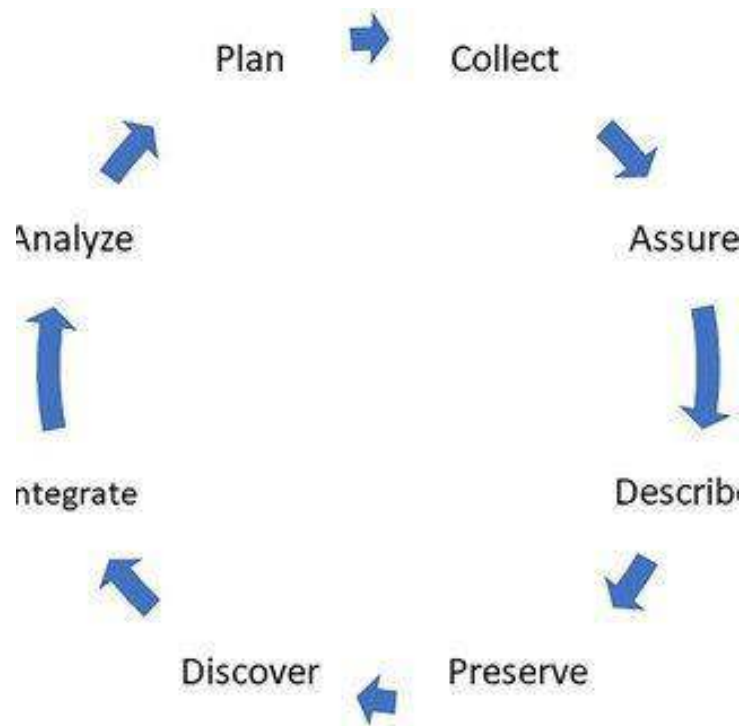
– each person if they wish could speak about their practice, what they have gleaned so far and where their work is going. Doing this will hopefully help look for avenues of exploration and discussion as we all learn from each other.

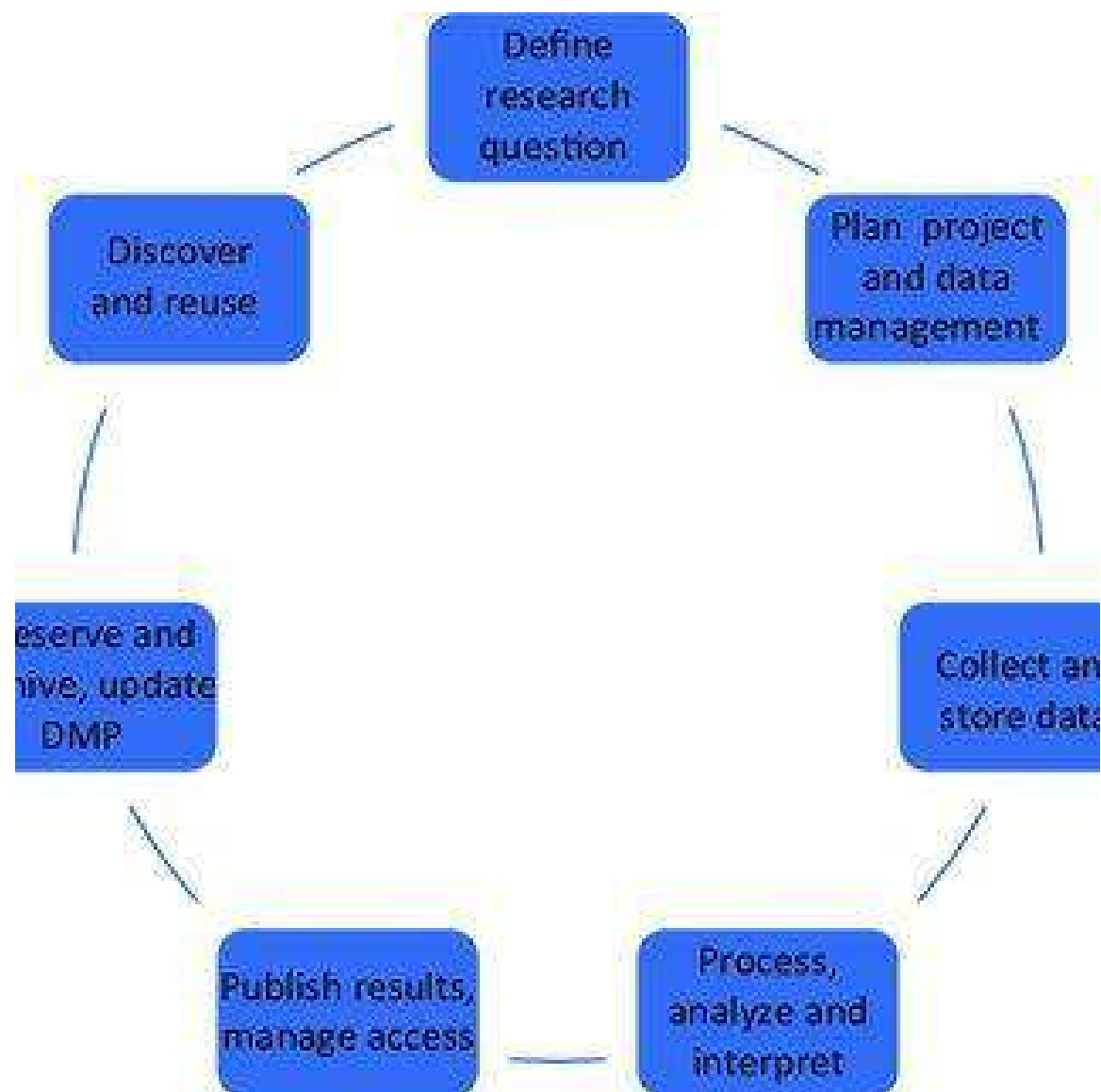
It is a free day to explore your work and if the weather is good to make a walk in the landscape or further afield. Progressing on with your work and I will be there to support your research if you wish.

If you agree we may look at opening the studio to visitors with prior agreement with the management team.

**28 SEPTEMBER – leave by 10.00am**







## Materials discussion

Aim – explore the tools ,paints, pigments.

Method – quick landscape studies using the blot method - **Cozens**

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PIGMENTS – property of pigments – what is a pigment

Marble dust, glacial sand, pastel

BINDERS – Gum Arabic, PVA, Matt Medium

Make some basic watercolour paint with the binders to use in the first painting