

How I made Bone Black Paint

Step 1: Find bones.... I went mudlarking along the Thames and found so many bones I decided to make pigment! I have always worked with shop bought pigments and wanted to test out making my own.



Step 2: Clean Bones... mine were covered in mud from the Thames. I cleaned them up as best I could and left to dry in the sun for 2 days.



Step 3: Prep for Firing: To limit air to get to the bones I tightly wrapped mine up in tin foil.



Step 4: Burn them. Using my kiln I took the temperature up fast to 450c and held it for just over two hours. I kept the studio well ventilated as it produced a lot of smoke.



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Step 5: I selected the darkest bones from the batch. The ones in the middle had not got as much heat and had brown patches, next time I will burn less bones at a time.



Step 6: Grind the bones in a pestle and mortar. I spent 20 mins but think I could have spent longer



Step 7: Add binder and mull pigment. I used a watercolour binder I had made previously with gum Arabic. It was very grainy and I spent about 30 mins working the muller to even out the particles.



Step 8: Pour watercolour into a pan. Mine took about 5 days to dry. The colour it produced was a deep black/brown colour, with a decent tinting quality.



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It wasn't the pure Rembrandt dark black I had hoped for but I'm very content to now have a stash of paint in my studio that is 100% mine. There is something quite beautiful working with a colour that you made from scratch. Here is a recent painting I made with it.

