

Drawing: Walnut Ink

by Kim Fjordbotten



The beauty of walnut ink is the wide variety of brown tones it creates. It is a deep umber to rich sepia in saturated applications but light, translucent yellow ochre in thin glazes. Start with a concentrated colour and then dilute it as needed.

Working with water-soluble inks is intuitive. Your approach can be either additive, subtractive or both. The ink is completely resolvable, moveable and removable. It will stain paper to an attractive light golden shade.

Walnut Drawing Ink
Tom Norton Walnut Drawing Ink® owes its reputation for supreme quality to its unique

formula which uses premium imported pigment. Experience the unique characteristics and beauty of the ink used by the Old Masters without the acidic qualities of the old formula that fades, is highly acidic and damages paper over time. Tom Norton Walnut Drawing Ink® is extremely lightfast.

NEW! Darkening Medium

Tom Norton's Darkening Medium® is not an ink but an additive to be used to darken the original ink when a drawing needs that extra "punch". Some artists will add black India ink to darken the color of Walnut Ink. This will work but you will sacrifice the unique watercolor characteristics of the ink and lose the ability to lift color or lighten areas.

The Darkening Medium® is very heavily pigmented and made with the same binder as the original so it can be added or mixed with Tom Norton's Original Ink® without changing its working properties. It can also be used straight from the bottle. However, it is so heavily pigmented it will behave more like a Sumi ink and stain the paper and not lift as easily as the original.

The Additive Approach

This is the most common way artists work: by adding material and colour. Walnut ink was originally used by calligraphers who wanted a variation on the standard black ink that was widely available. It is an excellent ink for detailed drawing and fine lines. The bird below was drawn using a cork penholder and Speedball 513 nib.

"I am not experienced in calligraphy, so I have always been a little frustrated with dip pen work. Usually I get short, scratchy lines and often stop to reload my pen. Walnut ink turned out to be the perfect viscosity to stay loaded on the nib. The tiniest drop of ink flowed freely and fine lines seemed to draw forever – which of course led me to overwork an area. No worries -- with a swish of a wet brush all was moved and refreshed. Walnut ink cannot be 'over-worked' it can only be 'over-played.' - Kim Fjordbotten



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The Subtractive Approach

The subtractive process is a method to take away or remove colour in order to create an image.

Walnut ink is perfect for this technique!

- Brush the ink in rich tones to fill a sheet of watercolour paper.
- After it dries for about half an hour, use a clean, wet brush for mark-making on the dry surface.
- Next, blot the wet areas with a dry cloth (e.g., an old t-shirt) to lift the ink and create various lighter shades and shapes.
- Remember to blot, not scrub. Light handling will keep the surface from looking overworked.



We recommend St Armand rough handmade paper ('rough' refers to the paper's texture). Handmade papers are generally not as heavily sized as other papers like Arches or Gemini, which are less absorbent. The ink can be removed more easily from the harder surfaces of those brands. The soft, dimpled surface of St Armand is excellent for helping to create interesting effects with little effort.

Using Stencils

While it is not thick enough to use as stencil paint, stencils can still be used in the subtractive method to create interesting background paper or edges for visual journals, calligraphy and other art. Flood the page with dark, rich ink and let it dry. Place the stencil on the surface and rub the area with a slightly damp rag. The ink will remove easily, leaving a ghost image of the stencil.



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Some Suggestions for Using Walnut Ink for Visual Journals

Creating an Antiqued Look

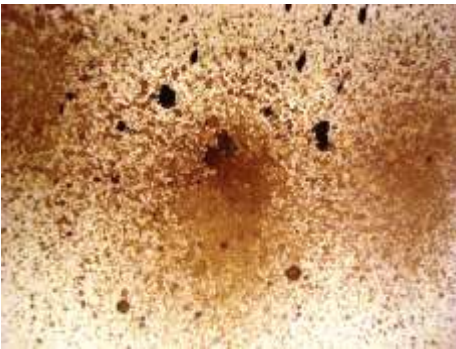
Walnut ink is commonly used to age items to get the antiqued look of old documents. Dilute your ink wash with a 50% water to stain items for use on your scrapbook pages or greeting cards. New photocopies of old pictures and text can be printed then painted with walnut ink wash at half strength.

Objects can also be 'antiqued'. Lace, fabric or doilies can be dipped into a 50% solution of walnut ink and allowed to dry.



Using a Mouth Atomizer

With this 'mouth-powered' tool you can spray an irregular mist of walnut ink through stencils and found objects or just darken the edges of a page.



Varnishing

Walnut ink is completely re-workable. At some point, you may decide you want your art to be permanent and not smudge nor be damaged by water. If you wish to waterproof it, this can be done with a spray varnish like Krylon Crystal Clear or Golden MSA Varnish (spray or brush). EnviroTex Lite is a two part epoxy varnish that will coat your walnut ink art with a layer of 50 coats of clear varnish in just one step. Brilliant!

We hope this will give you a good place to start with your jar of walnut ink powder. See what you can find to use it on, and don't be afraid to experiment!

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