Pigments

Robinson uses a wide selection of colours, as his palette from 2000 to 2008 demonstrates. Colours that he predominantly favours are showcased in the three paint cross-sections shown, along with the accompanying images taken under ultraviolet light. UV images help highlight certain pigments more effectively, particularly when they appear to be the same colour in natural light.

Titanium white is Robinson’s principal white pigment, seen clearly in cross-section B. It also constitutes the lower ground in cross-section A, along with chalk. Titanium white is a synthesised pigment made from titanium dioxide and has been widely used by artists since the early 20th century as a stable, affordable, non-toxic pigment.

CROSS-SECTION A of the double ground with inset UV image highlighting the two distinct layers with the more fluorescent barium sulfate/zinc white upper layer and the more UV-absorbant chalk/titanium white lower layer.

Zinc white is not a pigment used by Robinson as a paint but has been found as a component in his titanium whites and the grounds of many of his paintings, usually accompanied by barium sulfate. It can be seen as the uppermost fluorescing layer of ground in the UV detail of cross-section A.

Ultradure blue is a brilliant blue pigment used since the 6th century, originally made from ground lapis lazuli. However, since it was able to be synthesised to chemically replicate the natural pigment in the 19th century, the synthetic form has replaced the very expensive natural ultramarine. The synthetic form has been used by artists such as Pierre-Auguste Renoir, Édouard Manet, Claude Monet, and Paul Cézanne, and features in cross-section B and as the lower darker blue on the left side of cross-section C.

Cerulian blue is a synthetic blue made from cobalt stannate, a cobalt-tin compound. It is more spectrally neutral than the warmer ultramarine blue, and has been used by artists such as Monet since the 1860s. It features in the top paint layer on the right and left sides of cross-section C.

Rose Madder is a red dye made from the ground root of the madder plant, and is precipitated or “attached” to an inorganic substrate to be used as a pigment. It has been used as a pigment since the Greco-Roman period, and previously as a pure dye in textiles as early as the 15th century BC. It was favoured by artists such as Jan Vermeer, J.M.W. Turner, and the Impressionists, and frequently features in Robinson’s paintings. It is seen as the red particles in cross-section B, and as the fluorescing orange particles in B and D.