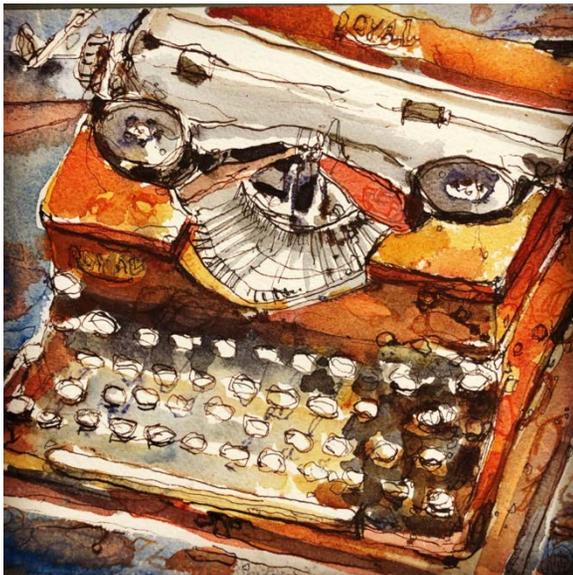


Paint and Typewriters: To Paint or Not to Paint
Virtual Herman's November 2020
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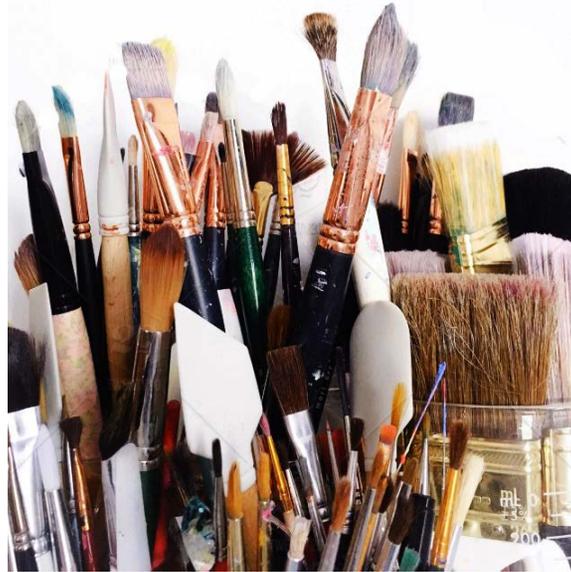
I have always loved to draw and paint. I was also one of those kids that liked to take things apart to see what made it go. I restored my first car which was a 1974 1/2 MGB to pretty close to factory condition under the hood and worked to get the body back to as close to factory as possible.



Landscape, Watercolor, 2015¹



Royal P, Watercolor, 2018



Paintbrush Collection: Sable, Synthetic, and Bristle

I love collecting the tools as well -the screwdrivers, the paintbrushes, and often hand shaped tools for specific tasks. Making the tool to make the thing has always been at the forefront of how I think and work.

When to paint a typewriter? Typically, I would rather not put paint typewriters at all. I think machines that have their original paint and decals are absolutely gorgeous. I first try to put the machine back to its original design intent – that may involve some selective placement of glossy black enamel paint on chipped corners. If a machine's paint is so far past the point where it can be salvaged, and I think we have all seen a few of those, then I think of the surface of the typewriter as a canvas. I try to let the typewriter have a second life with a new story.

There is nothing more gorgeous than a glossy black lacquer typewriter that is in original mint condition. The glossy black machines are often the easier machines to touch up when there are some serious paint issues due to abuse or rough wear. Glossy epoxy paint is easily found. There are some paints that are better than others.

Typically, automotive grade paint is great. Preparing the surfaces of the metal is also key. I tend to remove the bodies off of the frame when possible so that I can wet/dry sand the areas to be painted. Sometimes the bodies can be left on if there is very minor touch. If the paint is seriously damaged – I try to have fun with it. I would not use artists acrylics like Liquitex (housepaint) to touch up or paint a typewriter. They do not have the strength to hold up to use.

I have always had a keen interest in painting in watercolor, acrylics, and oils. I have also restored several cars and am familiar with automotive and sign painting paints. Often the bodies can be left on the machine if the areas to be touched up are minor. Degreasing and preparing the metal surfaces is key to good paint adhesion. Wet/dry sanding with a super fine grit sandpaper helps. A 600 grit automotive paper works great.



1937 Corona 3 in glossy black had the normal wear where the platen folds onto the front painted black frame.

If the paint is seriously damaged – I try to have fun with solving the puzzle of what to do with it. What are the possible solutions with making the

machine appealing again or at least make people want to use it and hopefully provide value to it? I don't paint machines that do not have working internal mechanics... they don't have to be spotless, they just have to work as they should. First, the machine's mechanics should be completely functional before I would consider touching up or painting a machine.



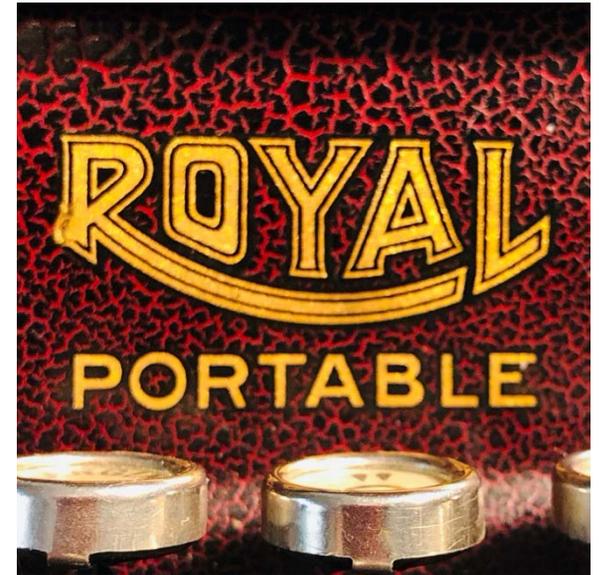
This 1938 Erika M had been without a case for a while and was missing some black paint on the spool cover top.



This 1931 Royal P with its duotone paint finish is worn around the top of the mask cover.

I would not attempt to touch up original complicated paint jobs such as woodgrain, airbrushed finishes (like duotone), alligator crackle (crinkle) finishes. Some paint colors and paint textures are also almost impossible to replicate, and touch ups often just look like sad attempts. Often touch ups look worse than just leaving the machine alone.

When making repairs, I believe the less that you have to do to the machine the better.



This 1927 Royal P with its red alligator paint finish is almost impossible to touch up without it looking like it has been touched up.

Often the original finishes were somewhat experimental and often flake off easily or the colors are more fugitive. Fugitive is when the original colors do not keep their color – reds can often fade in the light for example and become pink.

I have a love in restoring typewriters and I occasionally find machines that need cosmetic attention. Normal wear on machines is often an asset – but, often times these machines need a little help getting back to a place that makes them appealing to the user. I do have a couple of machines that are so well-worn that they might not appear to work but function flawlessly.



This 1928 Royal P had its body/masks removed to touch up the paint.

While the bodies are off – it allows for a deep cleaning of the machine to make sure it works great. It also allows for easy access to the rubber parts that might need to be replaced like the platen, rollers, and feet.



1930 Scarlet Red Underwood 4-Bank This was found in a cardboard box. After I put it back together and tuned it up it worked super – but, was missing the spool covers. I found original spool covers in black. I custom mixed 1-Shot epoxy paint to match the machine.



Underwood 4-Bank spools that were painted with custom-mixed color.



1930 Scarlet Red Underwood 4-Bank with new spools

Mixing the paint colors takes a lot of trial and error to get it to match. I don't want to paint entire machines especially when the original decals are in great shape.

Sometimes areas are painted to not only make the machine look as factory close as possible – but it helps to keep the existing paint from flaking or areas with missing paint from growing.



Sign Painters' 1-Shot paint



Sign Painters' 1-Shot paint and flow enhancer. There are several additives that harden, help flow, or thin the paint.



19xx Groma Kolibri with its body plates removed. The metallic beige paint was scraped in several locations and missing.



19xx Groma Kolibri detail



19xx Remington Quiet Riter that had large sections of the grey/green matt paint scraped off.

This Remington's internal workings were super... but the finish was bad. The typewriter appeared to have been a canvas for a 3-year-old had a rusty nail and was practicing drawing zig zag patterns. After removing the body and stripping all the paint – it was primed, sanded, and painted with a base coat of glossy black. The green colors were chosen to compliment the dark green color of the plastic keys. The inspiration was thin grasses blowing in the wind or moving underwater.

The reason to not touch up... it will look worse. Wear can be acceptable and good.



19xx Royal O



A 1929 Underwood 4-Bank that had severe missing paint on the spool covers and at the 4 corners.

For the blue Underwood, I used the Japanese philosophy of Golden Joinery to patch and bind the corners. While the machine is not physically broken – the black paint that I added on the blue machine would have been abrupt – so I used the idea of this technique to bring it back together. I decided I would not be able to match the paint

color exactly because it had a unique matt finish. I would not have been able to match it. I feel that when I “almost” get the color right is very distracting and an obvious repair. If it is going to be an obvious repair – at least have a solid philosophy as to why you are doing it.

Kintsugi (金継ぎ, "golden joinery"), also known as kintsukuroi (金繕い, "golden repair"), is the Japanese art of repairing broken pottery by mending the areas of breakage with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum, a method similar to the maki-e technique



An Olivetti ICO that had previously been damaged and repaired with a mismatched paint color.



Detail of Olivetti ICO

The red Olivetti ICO had been damaged and repaired and the repair was very obvious and distracting. The machine operated perfectly – but, it needed some attention. I pulled all of the panels off of the machine so I could reform, fill, sand, prime, sand, paint, and then put on a glossy clear coat.²