Secondary light reflections

Intro to light reflections. As all of you know, I locate light reflections on a miniature, by taking a picture of it in a specific angle under my desklamp. By having this reference photo, I can use the light reflections as guidelines for where to paint the brightest highlights on a miniature. At the same time the light reflections, gives the miniature a natural touch, as the light reflections will represent the brightest light source in the environment, the miniature is in – for example the sun. (If you haven't read the document for this, I recommend you to do it, before continuing here!)

What is secondary light reflections? In able to give a miniature a even more natural touch, we also need to add secondary light reflections. So what is secondary light reflections ? Secondary light reflections, aren't necessary affected by the main light source, but can also be created by other elements in the environment, the miniature is in. This can be ground elements – like earth texture, water, plants etc. It can also just be elements on the miniature, that creates the secondary light reflections. Finally, the amount of secondary light reflections also depends on the material the secondary light reflections are created on – very brigh gold / or silver, can have multiple light reflections, because of there shiny'ness – where a very matt black armour, wont create the same amount of secondary light reflections – or just light reflections in general.

 Examples of light reflections can be found almost all the artworks of Warhammer . wich are made with a natural & realistic perspective (Wich is also where I find a lot of inspiration myself). The artwork below of a Black Legion space marine, has a main light source, that hits a lot of the raised areas on his body (1). But there is also an turqoise element coming from the ground, that creates secondary light reflections on the lowest areas of his armour, the beheaded heads & his axe. (2)
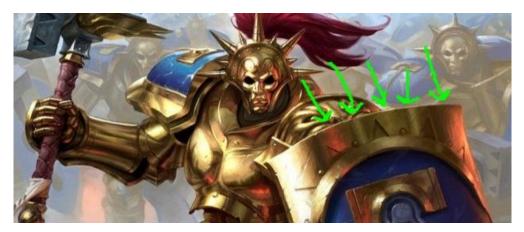
I have also added secondary light reflections like this to a lot of my recent miniatures, that are affected by especially the surroundings, that the miniature is standing in. The latest example is from my Black templars, that have a brownish secondary light reflection, wich is created by the surroundings they are standing in (See second picture, with finished base) The secondary light reflections, are therefor placed on the lowest areas (most shaded areas) that points directly / or in a angle towards the ground.

Another Warhammer art example, where secondary light reflections are shown, could for example be on this Stormcast eternal, wich obviously has a gold armour, that is highly reflective. I cant count more than 5 secondary light reflections on some of the areas, wich gives this very convincing sparking gold armour.

This is also something I have tried to replicate myself, on my latest NMM gold – but not with that many secondary light reflections though. On this specific gold, my aim was to create some orange'ish secondary light reflections, as I wanted to gold to feel warm. This is once again a personal reference – but if the surroundings are cold, like with snow or ice, I would go for more cold tones like blue, grey or lighter browns.
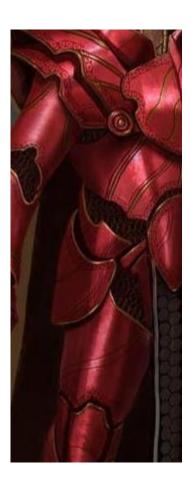
Placement of the secondary light reflections

This can be a very tricky area to explain, but there is a couple of ways to figure out the placement of the light reflections – that I go with at least. The first one is, as mentioned earlier, to place the light reflections on the lower parts of an armour, that is closest to the lower surroundings of the miniature. Here we also know what tones to go with, as we try to imitate the colours of the ground. For the upper parts of an armour, I tend to add a secondary light reflection in between the main light reflections – or on each sides of the main light reflections. This varies a lot from shape to shape, so here my advice would be to look up a real life/or fantasy reference photo on google, of the specific material you are painting & the shape. On the picture below, we can see that the light reflection shapes varies a lot from shapes like ball & cylinder.

On the armour of the Flesh tearer captain below – here you can see in front of the white arrows, that I placed light reflections on especially the leg armour that are turning down towards the ground – & also closest to the ground. On the mid light reflection on his belly armour area, I have placed secondary light reflection on each side of it. This is just my approach, & I am sure it varies from artist to artist. The next picture is a reference photo I used for the red armour.

Conclusion

Painting secondary Light reflections can in general be a difficult task to master – we need to keep a lot of things in mind before we start painting them: The surroundings of the miniature has a influence of the tone of the secondary light reflections - the different shapes of the material where we want to place the light reflections varies from shape to shape, wich is something that we need to analyze before placing/painting them & finally the amount of secondary light reflections can also variey a lot , depending on the material. As mentioned before, my best advice is to look up fantasy/ or real life photos of the specific material you are painting, & use that as a reference – this saved me a lot of time when I started to add them to my miniatures.

I truly hope this article will give you a better understanding of secondary light reflections & how to approach them. Remember there is also a guide for how to paint main light reflections, that I would recommend you to read before working with light reflections in general, as that guide gives a specific tool for how to place the main light reflections.

Best regards Nikolas