

Oil painting without solvents



For many artists oil painting just wouldn't be the same without the use of Turpentine and other traditional mediums. However, the odours of these diluents can cause health problems for sensitive users. This concern has led to the commonly held misconception that solvents like turpentine are an integral part of oil painting. **NOT SO!** This leaflet has been produced to help those with concerns about the effects of solvents to still enjoy the obvious visual benefits and pleasures of oil painting.

The Surface:

Thorough preparation of the surface is the key factor in the success of an oil painting. Commercially available, pre-primed stretched canvas and panels can be purchased, but you can easily prepare your own without using toxic lead-based primers.



Art Spectrum Artists' Gesso can be applied to a wide range of textural substrates such as fine or coarse linens, cottonduck canvas, hardboard, paper or panels. Two or three thin coats of gesso provides the right degree of absorbency

and creates a fine surface to paint onto. Art Spectrum Artists' Gesso is a fast drying, finely balanced acrylic compound and requires only water for clean up.

For the artist who desires the superior qualities of an oil based primer, which

provides a crosslink and excellent adhesion between the substrate and subsequent layers of paint, Art Spectrum Artists' Oil Prime should be used. This patented product contains 40% linseed oil, yet thins and cleans up with water. It is applied directly to the canvas or other substrate in the same way as gesso- no glue sizing is required with either gesso.

The Paint:

Artists' oil colours dry by oxidation, not evaporation (ie: they absorb oxygen from the air). This makes them safer to use than many modern paints that 'fume-off' to dry. Art Spectrum Artists' Oil Paint is made with natural binders. Properly milled oil colours contain no turpentine and are basically comprised of just two ingredients- pigment and natural vegetable oil- linseed. (Safflower Oil is used in the case of whites). Art Spectrum Artists' Oil Colours can be used straight from the tube as they contain all the medium necessary (linseed oil) for successful painting. Art Spectrum Oil Colours are very intense, easy to use and offer great

flexibility with many varied effects achieved with simple, direct techniques without the use of solvents, (eg: glazing, wet into wet, scumbling, alla prima, underpainting, broken colour and impasto).



Spectrum Clear Oil Paint is a product well worth exploring. It is formulated as an oil paint, but without coloured pigments. With Clear Oil the integrity of each brush stroke is retained, which is not the case with most mediums which tend to level or smooth out brush strokes. It can, however, be considered a medium because of the effects it helps create. Clear Oil Paint can reduce colours to pale tints without the use of whites or mediums.

- Tremendous depth of colour is possible by painting wet into wet or in thin glazes
- Oil colours can be extended without loss of brilliance or structure
- Opaque colours can be made transparent
- As many Art Spectrum colours are transparent, try making use of this quality by using Clear Oil Paint instead of white.

Painting Tools:

The Most important tool of the artist is the brush. Choosing a range of good quality brushes of different shapes and sizes is a distinct advantage in painting at any time, but particularly so when not using solvents. Choose a firm brush made from bristle, sable or synthetic fibres.

- **Flats** - The long bristles provide flexibility and colour carrying capacity to enable oil paint to be brushed and worked over

large areas, The chisel shape will detail a hard edge, and provides easy colour on colour application.

- **Brights** - shorter and therefore stronger bristles hold less paint than flats, but give crisper, harder edged brush marks.

Ideal for layering on small areas of colour or distributing paint thinly. Can also be used to push off colour.

- **Filberts** - the rounded edges of filberts produce softer brush marks than flats or brights. Thin lines can be

drawn with the edge of the brush, or thick brush strokes using the flat side.

- **Long Filberts** - can be used like a liner to apply sweeping strokes of thinned paint, but are most effective for layering colour onto colour without muddying. The paint is usually applied with a 'patting' motion using the flat of the brush rather than the tip.

- **Rounds** - very versatile shape. Quality bristles allow for detailed oil painting. The brush distributes full loads of colour smoothly and evenly. The artist can easily change from a thin line to a broad mark in one stroke.

- **Fans** - used for blending and merging of edges, also special effects such as foliage. Fans can be used on edge, twisted and dragged or flicked.

Also don't forget the many shapes of Art Spectrum painting knives which have sensitive, flexible blades for applying paint directly onto the canvas. Consider scrapers and even lint free cloth for rubbing and applying oil paint to your chosen surface. With these tools the luscious textural qualities of Art Spectrum Artists' Oil Colours can be thoroughly exploited by painting out, dabbing, scumbling, scraping, dragging, detailing etc. With Art Spectrum colour intensity brushed out to the limit, unexpected undertones often appear, adding new dimensions to the painting.

Mediums:

Mediums are used to alter the normal characteristics of the paint. The addition of any type of medium, solvent based or not, inevitably alters the careful balance of oil and pigment in properly milled



paint. As discussed, it is not necessary to use mediums at all in a painting, however if certain effects are desired remember to always use mediums sparingly and with care and thought for the consequences. Refined Linseed and Stand Linseed Oil (small amounts only as too much will retard drying) can be used alone as mediums to soften the paint and enhance flow. This is particularly useful for alla prima techniques.

Clean Up:

Perhaps the most contentious area of all, as solvents do make clean up of oil paint quick and easy. However, they CAN be successfully avoided.

During painting - to clean brushes while you work requires a slight change in practice and a little more time. Firstly wipe off or brush out as much excess paint as possible. Then rinse the brush in a light vegetable oil (eg: refined linseed or safflower) and wipe onto a rag or absorbent paper - whatever is at hand. The wise artist will have enough brushes to ensure no unwanted contamination of colours occurs.

At completion of painting - proceed as above, then lather brushes on a cake of pure soap (or commercially available brush cleaner and conditioner). Work the brush thoroughly to ensure all remnants of paint are removed, then rinse in warm water. Shake out the excess water and allow to dry.

These processes ensure a longer life for your valuable brushes, as harsh solvents shorten the life.

If you really must use solvents

The following three contain minimal amounts of solvent and lower the effect for those sensitive to turpentine odours.

- **Art Spectrum Liquol**- a fast drying alkyd based painting and glazing medium. Ideal for multi layered glazing where it will give great depth and subtlety of colour.

- **Art Spectrum Painting Gel**- quick drying alkyd based gel. Use for moderate impasto and glazing techniques.

- **Art Spectrum Wax Medium**- mixture of oil and beeswax. Add to oil colour to achieve a translucent effect. Imparts a lustrous, satin finish.

Art Spectrum offer a range of **odourless and reduced odour mediums** in addition to the traditional ranges. Also available (for clean up only) is biodegradable Art Spectrum Art Clean. It has a strong citrus odour and will clean and revitalise even dried up brushes, remove paint stains from clothes and other surfaces.

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Since 1966. Finest Artists' Colours
Made in Australia

Phone: +61 3 9387 9799

Fax: +61 3 9380 4825

Email: enquiries@artspectrum.com.au

Web: www.artspectrum.com.au