

VARNISHING

Artists have more problems with varnishing than with any other stage of the painting process.

Varnishing should be an almost mechanical process undertaken to give your painting a protective coating, with the surface quality you prefer (gloss, satin, etc) and possibly an enhancement of colour contrast, but if you leave it till the last moment and use a varnish you are not used to, you can ruin the work you are trying to protect.

Anxiety and disappointment can be avoided easily if you do sample pieces using the same materials as the painting and varnish them, not the painting, until you get the effect you wanted.

Water based varnishes are tricky to apply and not removable if you dislike the effect, so we suggest they should only be used by artists who already know them well and are not experimenting.

CHROMA SOLVENT FINISHING VARNISHES

We recommend and prefer our Chroma Solvent based varnishes because they can be used on all our Chroma paint brands, Atelier Interactive, Jo Sonja's, Absolute Matte, or Archival Oils.

Application of all these varnishes is by brush, a broad housepaint brush, and clean up is in mineral turpentine. If applying multiple coats allow 24 hours drying time between applications. Choose from these finishes:

Gloss

Apply as is for a full gloss, usually one coat. To Reduce Gloss add mineral turpentine to your taste. Try two parts varnish to 1 part turpentine, up to 1:1 for less sheen.

NOTE: The new varnishes have an anti mould additive which is diluted when you add turpentine, so to maintain the mould protection for tropical conditions dilute with invisible varnish instead.

Satin

This is our most popular, most unobtrusive varnish.

- The satin finish contains a flattening agent and the container needs to be shaken before use to make sure it is evenly suspended. For full bottles: remove some varnish so you can shake the contents easily, then return to the full bottle before using.
- Satin varnishes should never be diluted with turpentine, because the ratio of flattening agent to acrylic is critical.

Invisible Varnish

This varnish offers mould protection without altering the look of the painting.

- It can also be used on oil paintings as a "retouch" varnish, while waiting out the advisable 3-6 month period for an oil painting to cure before applying a heavier protective varnish.
- On acrylics it can be used for mould protection, and does not alter the appearance of matte surfaces, including the very matte finish of Absolute Matte, and does not stain paper.

Resolability

This is an attractive feature of all these mineral turpentine based varnishes, which can be cleaned at some later date by swabbing with mineral turpentine, which does not attack either acrylic or oil paintings, but can be used to remove the varnish layer.

WATER BASED ACRYLIC VARNISHES - POPULAR BUT DIFFICULT TO USE

We get more distressed phone calls about water based varnishes which did not behave as expected, than on any other subject, yet these varnishes remain too popular to be discontinued.

- If you are a happy user, use on, but if you are painting with Atelier Interactive the varnish may behave differently with the new paint. This is mainly because an uncured painting can be quite water absorbent making it difficult to spread the varnish. How does one know when a painting is cured you may ask: with different climate conditions and paint thicknesses it is not possible to say exactly when, but a cured painting is not water absorbent, and curing is hastened by dry warmth.
- If you are using solvent varnishes you can go ahead and varnish uncured Atelier Interactive paintings.
- All water based varnishes are non-removable. Solvents like acetone will remove them, but will also remove the painting.
- Water based varnishes can remain milky for a long time if some of the water gets trapped in the varnish layer. Placing near a heat source will usually fix this problem.
- Water based varnishes are much more difficult to apply evenly than the turpentine based ones.
- There is always some apprehension when varnishing, and water based varnishes should always be tried out first because they can't be removed, whereas the solvent based ones can if you don't like the effect.

FURTHER READING

Atelier Interactive website: www.atelierinteractive.com

Archival website: www.archivaloils.com

Guide to grounds and mediums A4 flyer