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Interactive basic information guide

What you should know before you start

During the period 1965 – 2008, artists' acrylics have become very popular and a wide range of techniques has evolved based on the toughness and fast drying nature of the paint, which has no technical restraints such as the "Fat over Lean" rule for oil painting.

An "old style" acrylic which is the same as it was in 1965 doesn't need explaining. Something which is genuinely new in the sense of opening whole new horizons as Atelier Interactive does needs communication for people to share information about what can be done with it.

Acrylic painting may seem easier than oil painting, but it has had two major disadvantages:

1. The paint dries so fast that artists do not have enough time for blending and developing their paintings in the wet state as oil painters do.
2. The colours darken slightly in value when they dry, and the paint dries so quickly that artists always find themselves over painting, which makes matching of colour/tonal values impossible when wet paint is applied over dry paint.

Atelier Interactive is the most significant improvement in artists acrylics since the 1960's because it gives the artist full control over these two critical factors:

- Drying time &
- Colour change from wet to dry.

However it is carefully balanced so that the many "old" techniques which everyone uses remain in place.

OLD TECHNIQUES

"Old" acrylics dry quickly because as the water evaporates, or is absorbed into the substrate, the paint forms a waterproof skin, and artists find themselves sliding a new wet layer over what has just dried, layer upon layer.

If you do not prolong the open time by using a water spray your "old" fast drying effects will take place much as usual, and there are mediums which **accelerate** fast drying when required.

Adding Binder or Impasto Gel or Fast Medium

- To return **thicker paint** to a fully skin forming "old" style acrylic add Binder, or thicker still add Impasto Gel. Artists who use sgraffito techniques and want to scratch back vigorously may choose to use either of these mediums in their under painting, because soggy uncured Atelier Interactive can be dislodged by scratching too hard.
- Thinner painting techniques like multiple layering can be accelerated by using Fast Medium/Fixer instead of water, or a soggy layer can be fixed by brushing unpigmented medium over it.

When these fast skin forming mediums are used the advantage of colour matching between layers is lost.

MEDIUMS FOR FAST DRYING OLD TECHNIQUES

- Binder Medium
- Fast Medium/Fixer
- Impasto Gel
- Modelling Compound, which is used for texture,
- Matte Medium and Varnish
- Satin Medium and Varnish
- Gloss Medium and Varnish

COMPATIBILITY WITH “OLD” FAST DRYING ACRYLICS

Compatibility is fine, but **mixtures** revert to fast drying mode and are best used for under painting. *To get the full benefit of Atelier Interactive, it must be used alone or with its own Slow Mediums.*

NEW TECHNIQUES

Atelier Interactive has a different drying behaviour:

Stage 1

As the water evaporates *it does not form a skin*, it becomes progressively tackier but remains open and can be kept workable by replacing the water which has been lost, usually by spraying with a water spray until it absorbs enough moisture to lose the tacky feel. Wet blending can be prolonged as long as desired, giving artists the opportunity to control their painting process and complete an idea wet-in-wet.

An important difference between “Old” and “New” techniques when using mediums

Fast drying mediums dry and form a skin quickly, so that fresh paint simply slides over that dry layer and is not affected by it.

The two slow mediums used in “new” techniques **do** have an effect on over painting done in the same session because they remain wet or at least damp and artists using them may decide to do so only in the early stages of a session because they remain **active** when the water spray is used, and artists working this way need to decide whether to use more medium or not.

The artist must also decide when to stop, because **too much blending can lead to muddy colours**, as with oil painting.

Stage 2

Atelier Interactive goes through a curing cycle instead of drying suddenly to form a skin of dry paint like “old” acrylics. When it does not receive replacement water, it goes from the tacky stage to a firm stage which seems to be dry but is still responsive to water: to continue painting, dampen the whole painting, which will absorb water in the same way as dampened watercolour paper, and it will become very sympathetic to paint on, but most important:

The dampened painting will return to its wet values, making it as easy to match values as it is when continuing an oil painting.

MEDIUMS FOR NEW SLOW DRYING WET-IN-WET TECHNIQUES

- **Slow Medium (Liquid)** is a syrupy medium which reduces viscosity and extends wet working time.
 - **Thick Slow Medium** has a more paint like viscosity and also extends wet working time.
- Both these mediums reduce the frequency of spraying needed to maintain a wet blending session, and in dry conditions about 15% Retarder added to the water spray will also reduce the evaporation rate.
- **Unlocking Formula.** After the paint has dried, eg one day later, the paint can still be reactivated by spraying the painting with Unlocking Formula.

CHOOSING AND USING A WATER SPRAY

Note from the above information that there are many ways to extend wet blending time, and it is sensible to start out with the water spray before exploring other methods, especially if the painting is not too large to be kept moist easily with a spray. A 500ml (1 pint) household spray set to a fine setting is all you need to control a painting which can be reached easily, standing back far enough to prevent water spattering.

When to Spray?

Brush drag and tackiness will be noticeable. To be sure, touch your painting and your fingertips will grip.

When to Stop?

When your fingertips **glide** on the surface you have enough moisture. Working horizontally can be helpful while learning to control the spray.

You may enjoy the mediums for their control of consistency as well as the slowing effect, but it is best to start out with only the water spray.

SLOW MEDIUMS TIP

The liquid medium dribbles when it is too wet and the thick one can be used to control it. I pick up paint on the brush and dip it into whichever medium I want, and I also use a wet brush - just water, no paint - to soften edges where I want to. I can get sharp edges, dry brush rough edges, and smooth softly gradated edges all happening at once, and no water spray.

OVERPAINTING & TONAL CHANGE

The two main disadvantages of artists' acrylics have been dealt with when you are using Atelier Interactive: You know that you can now extend wet-in-wet blending; the other disadvantage has been tone drift between wet & dry paint, which used to mean that it was impossible to match wet overpainting with the rest of the painting.

You can now make wet overpainting changes which sit perfectly with the rest of the dry painting. Here is what you do: thoroughly moisten the dry painting, which will be very water hungry until some time later when the painting cures. Spray heavily and wipe with a cloth so that the painting is saturated with moisture but not runny wet.

Overpainting 'takes' very nicely on a damp surface and it is easy to soften edges but most important: the freshly applied wet paint will match in perfectly with the damp painting you are working on, giving you easy control without tonal changes to worry about. Use your water spray occasionally if you want to keep going.

SURFACE BLENDING

"Surface blending" is a main feature of Atelier Interactive as important as "blending" wet-in-wet, as one does with oils, or the control of "tone drift" explained above. **Surface blending is probably more important than wet-in-wet blending**, and it does not resemble any oil painting manipulation of paint, because you can't do it with oils as they form a skin which prevents it.

When your painting reaches its mid stage between wet and dry, it can be re-hydrated by spraying with water, or if you have left it too long, you can use Unlocking Formula for several days later.

What happens in both cases is that the liquid penetrates from the surface downwards gradually, giving you unprecedented control over blending when you want to soften edges or merge and fuse your painting. The fundamental things that unify a painting are now much easier, because it is much more difficult to do wet-in-wet, in which case you have to deal with a whole layer of paint, which could be quite thick, making it difficult to do, and possibly resulting in unwanted muddy mixtures.

For all these reasons "surface blending" is a special new attribute that not even oil painters have access to.

CLIMATE - HUMIDITY AND TEMPERATURE INFLUENCE DRYING TIME

Interactive presents some unique opportunities and challenges for artists when glazing or layering. There are two ways to glaze and layer with Interactive fast or slow, this is a personal choice that people must make for themselves.

GLAZING AND LAYERING – SLOW OR FAST

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Fast Glazing and Layering

Involves quickly applying one layer over another, as you would do with traditional acrylics. Interactive does not form a tough skin when it dries, so it is possible to accidentally disturb a dry but un-cured layer of paint. To avoid unwanted results try the following:

- Use a soft brush and gentle strokes to apply the paint.
- If it is humid interactive will cure slowly so use a hair dryer (or heater) to speed up the process, Once the layer is cured it will not re-wet.
- Fast Medium/Fixer can be used to toughen Interactive paint layers, either mix it directly with the paint or apply unpigmented over the top of a layer you want to protect.

Slow Glazing and Layering

The slow drying and curing time of Interactive means you have much more time to adjust each layer, paint can be lifted out with a paint rag or easily blended back in with a soft brush. The layer can be kept workable with the water sprayer or a damp brush for an entire painting session. Unlocking Formula can be used to reactivate a layer the next day (and for longer in humid conditions) For this technique dilute Interactive with water or Clear Painting Medium. For even longer working time (especially in hot dry conditions) mix with Slow Painting medium and use the water sprayer to keep the layer moist. This is my preferred method of working because I feel the layers “fuse” better. The slow drying time of each layer means I usually work on more than one painting at a time.

A comprehensive guide to glazing and layering with Interactive can be found in the [Glazing and Layering Info Sheet](#).

PALETTES

“Stay-wet” palettes will store unused paint for long periods, but a flat palette can be used with occasional water spraying. See Chroma Info Sheet “Palettes for outdoor use”.

SUMMARY

Old Techniques

Do not use the water spray and possibly use the fast mediums (listed above).

New Techniques

For long blending techniques use a water spray and possibly the slow mediums (page 2).

FURTHER READING

Combine Old and New Techniques A5 leaflet: <http://www.chromaonline.com/chroma/content/download/2698/32133/file/Atelier Interactive Old and New Techniques.pdf>

Atelier Interactive Website: <http://www.atelierinteractive.com>

Atelier Interactive Users Guide

Atelier Interactive Colour Chart