

## Acrylic Paint Information Sheet

### Definitions

Acrylic paint – a pigment in which the vehicle is acrylic resin, a synthetic, organic plastic.

Gesso – plaster of paris or gypsum mixed with a binder used as a preparatory surface for painting.

Acrylic gloss medium – a substance which can be mixed with acrylic paint to increase transparency and gloss and ease paint flow. Also used as a varnish over finished work to protect and enhance color depth.

Acrylic paint is very different from watercolor paint. It is a much more forgiving medium than watercolor in that you can usually paint over your mistakes once the paint has dried. It is traditionally done in a more opaque manner than watercolor, which is a translucent media. It dries very quickly. It is water based so it cleans up easily. It is similar to oil paint but oil paint stays moist and workable for days. Acrylics dry in minutes.

Before we paint, we will prep our paper with gesso. This looks like latex paint and is applied with a large brush in thin even layers. The textural quality of your painting depends on the manner in which you apply your gesso. Once the gesso has dried, the drawing will be transferred using transfer paper.

The brushes that are used for acrylic paint are stiffer and taller than watercolor brushes. This is because acrylic paint has much more body than watercolor and you need a stiffer bristle to push the paint around. **Never leave acrylic paint on your paintbrush.** Once acrylic paints have dried, they form a plastic bond with the surface they dry on. Translation, you ruin the brush. The paint dries very fast so you must never lay aside a brush filled with paint. Always place your brush in the water and clean it out when you will not be using it for a while.

If you want to make the paint translucent or thinner, you may use water or gloss medium. **Always paint the background first.** If you do the foreground first, it will probably look like there's a halo around these objects. **When doing objects in shadow, mix complementary colors, not black.** Try to do most of your mixing right on the image. This will give your piece a more painterly quality. Keep in mind that white dulls the colors, not brightens.

If there is glare or shine, dry brush is the way to go, don't mix white with the color, just pick up small amounts of paint and scrub the brush on a surface prior to painting. When you scrub the brush on your painting you will be putting down small amounts of paint in a feathery fashion. On the opposite end, a wash works when you want to change the color of an entire area. Thin the paint down and wash a thin coat over the area. This will allow the base coat to come through. These paints will not wash out like watercolors. This technique works well when you want to tone down or brighten up an area. When using a fine brush for detail work, it may be necessary to thin down the paint with water. This will allow the paint to flow off the brush. Sometimes the paint is just too thick to use without thinning. A final coat of gloss medium gives your painting a protective coating and a glossy shine. Your painting is fairly impervious to ruin as acrylic paints dry to a plastic finish.