

# ARCHIVAL<sup>®</sup> OILS

## A GUIDE TO OILS AND MEDIUMS



CHROMA

*It's all about the paint.*



## Archival Oil Mediums

***It is essential to use Archival Oil Mediums with Archival Oils to maintain uniform flexibility.***

### Freedom of Technique:

All the fast mediums can be used in any combination and overpainting can proceed when the last layer is touch dry. There are only 2 rules to follow:

- Smooth Gel (fast drying):** Always add smooth gel to thick impasto to speed and stabilise drying.
- The '**fat over lean**' rule is built in because all of the mediums are flexible and you can overpaint when touch dry.

### Easy to Use:

**Archival Oil** mediums are designed to work as a system, giving artists easy control of paint consistency, handling and drying properties. The mediums can be used in any combination to produce exactly what the artist desires. When mixed with **Archival Oils** they also promote fast drying. (**Note:** paint on the palette does not dry fast until after a medium is added.)



Archival Odourless Solvent

### Health and Safety:

**Archival Oil Mediums** are all made with odourless solvents to minimise health hazards. For most people they are comfortable and safe to use and should be considered for Art Schools or any group situation where air space is shared. (Material Safety Data Sheets are available at [www.chromaonline.com/chroma/health\\_safety](http://www.chromaonline.com/chroma/health_safety))

## Oil paint: a Short History

***Traditional oil paints use very old technology said to have been invented by Jan Van Eyck about 1450! To understand where we fit in this long tradition we need a little history ...***

Oil paint replaced fresco and tempera because it offered blendability, the characteristic which has seen it dominate the Tradition of Western Art.

Artists were professionals and made up their own paints until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, when the tube was invented, making manufacture and storage possible.

**The Classical Rules of Oil Painting** evolved through the experience of trained and knowledgeable users who became aware of the technical limitations and wanted the best results they could get. Some mistakes were made: brittle copal mediums and varnishes and megilp mediums were quickly dropped from use.

***The two important rules are about processes to maintain as much flexibility as possible***

#### Rule 1 - Allow Paint to Cure

When doing thicker underpainting, it should be left for six months before continuing so as to allow the first layer to dry and cure through.

**Reason:** Oil paint absorbs oxygen to dry and cure. If it is overpainted too soon, the top layer, which gets more oxygen, cures first and becomes brittle while the under-layer is still settling down and moving.

The cracks in the image to the right were caused by painting on top of a previous painting which was not properly cured.

#### Rule 2 - Fat Over Lean

is not a mysterious archaic ritual; it is a quite simple rule which says: when painting in layers, always add a little more oil or oily medium in each layer.

**Reason:** The idea was to make the top layer as flexible as possible, so as to discourage cracking.

Stand oil, used in mediums, was marginally more flexible than raw linseed oil and this worked as the best method available before modern technologies were developed.



***This cracked painting was done using traditional oils over the top of another painting which was not properly dried and cured.***

***A number of developments occurred in the 20th century.***

#### 1920s

Driers were invented and were adopted covertly by makers of artists' oils because they promoted drying. They also promoted brittleness because linseed oil becomes more brittle the more completely it dries.

#### 1930s

Alkyd resins were invented and went on to displace linseed oil in housepaints by the 1960s. Picasso sometimes used Ripolin and Jackson Pollack also used industrial enamels in his dribble paintings but alkyds never became a replacement for artists' oils because of their consistency and the way they dried too fast on the palette.

**Plasticisers**, also starting out around 1930, are now a large class of chemicals (over 500 varieties) used throughout industry to give flexibility, where needed, to all sorts of brittle products.

#### 1960s

Artists' acrylics appeared, using acrylic resins modified with plasticisers to make them flexible.

#### 1990

**Archival Oils** were invented using linseed safflower oils modified with plasticisers to make them flexible. Flexibility turns out to be more important for artists' oils than in acrylics because of the movement and tensions between layers as the paint dries and cures.

Marginally flexible mediums based on stand oil or alkyd resins were also modified to be **really** flexible and were made up with odourless solvents to minimize the health issues.



***Euan Macleod often paints thin glazes over thick uncured underpainting; this would be disastrous with any oil other than Archival.***

***Freedom of technique, speed in drying and a healthier workplace are all important gains as technology has moved forward.***

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# > FAST MEDIUMS

## All Fast Drying Archival Mediums:

- > Are based on flexible alkyd resins.
- > Use odourless solvents to minimise health issues.
- Note:** Oil paint itself has no toxic smell, traditional mediums and solvents create the toxic fumes associated with oil painting.
- > Dry quickly to a satin finish which does not interfere with the look of the paint. (The exception is Fat Medium – see right.)
- > Can be mixed to meet your individual needs e.g:
  - Flow Gel + Smooth Gel** = a soft gel.
  - Lean medium + Flow Gel** = liquid paint with a hint of non syrupy, stay-put character.

## > For THICK Viscosity



**Smooth Gel**



Detail of a John R Walker painting where **Smooth Gel** has been used.

### Smooth Gel

will stabilise thick impasto. It has a paint-like consistency and can be used to spread paint easily without losing the crisp texture of knife or brushstrokes.



**Texture Gel**

### Texture Gel

is a new variation of the **Smooth Gel** with a gritty textural content made from ceramic beads, to give a crusty mineral look.

**Note:** Either of the above mediums should be mixed 1:1 with paint whenever a thick impasto is used with the intention of overpainting it.

Overpainting can then proceed when the stabilised impasto is touch dry, instead of waiting 6 months. If a gel medium is not used, thick impasto can take years to dry through; the underlayer remains like a soft centre chocolate and moves around, resulting in distortion of the surface and loss of the sharp definition of the paint application.

## > For MEDIUM Viscosity



**Flow Gel**



Detail of a painting where **Flow Gel** has been used.

### Flow Gel

Most oil paint is applied in the mid-viscosity range, usually by carefully diluting pasty tube colours with a liquid medium until it moves more easily. This new medium will become the favourite of most oil painters because of the control it gives over the painting process.

When your brush moves, the gel moves. When you stop, the gel stops. It allows control of thinned down applications of paint and is the perfect medium for 'laying in'. It can also be tactile or smooth according to how it is used. **Flow gel** replaces the old method of using smelly turps or turps based mediums for laying in. It spreads easily and holds when overpainting.

For more information ask for the **Focus on Flow Gel** leaflet, or visit the website at [www.archivaloils.com](http://www.archivaloils.com)

## > For THIN Viscosity



**Lean Medium** mixed with Cerulean Blue



Detail of a Euan Macleod painting where **Lean Medium** has been used.

### Odourless Lean Medium

is a liquid medium for diluting **Archival Oils** for glazing or other thin paint applications. Lean medium is also used to paint on top of **Flow Gel** paint to loosen it up.

## > For a GLOSS Finish



**Fat Medium** mixed with Crimson



Detail of a painting where **Fat Medium** has been used.

### Odourless Fat Medium

has a luminous gloss finish for "Flemish" style painting. It is fast drying, but does not tack up, remaining workable for a day. It can be added to lean medium to increase its sheen.



## 300ml Cartridges Sizes

Smooth Gel, Texture Gel, Flow Gel and selected Archival colours are available in 300ml cartridges. These cartridges need to be used with a caulking gun. This form of packaging is extremely air tight and allows the paint or medium to remain at the highest possible quality while not in use.

# > SLOW MEDIUM

> For SLOW DRYING Thin Viscosity



**Fat Medium** mixed with  
Arylamide Yellow Deep



Detail of a painting where  
**Classic Medium** has been used.

## Odourless Classic Medium

is made from flexible modified Stand Oil and takes about 5 days to dry. It suits the method of day-to-day, wet-in-wet blending, with alterations made by scraping off instead of overpainting. It can also be used as a final slow layer of glaze or paint on top of fast medium layers. (NB: do not use fast layers on top of slow ones.)

## WHITE ALSO INFLUENCES DRYING TIME

Most artists use four times as much white as any other colour. Some oil painters prefer Flake White because of its fast drying time. Standard **Titanium White** takes around 5 days. **Archival Oils Fast Drying Titanium White** dries faster: in one to two days. Therefore your choice of white can combine with your choice of mediums to influence overall drying speed.

> SLOW



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> FAST



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