



Artist's Panels



METHOD

HOW TO USE AN ARTIST'S PANEL

Technically, the first thing you want to achieve is a strong bond between the substrate and your paint layer. Don't think of your colour wash, your underpainting or your base layer of paint merely as an artistic preparation for subsequent paint layers, think of it as an *undercoat* to key your painting to the substrate. Doesn't matter what you're painting on or how you're painting or the material that you're using, the first application of paint is *always* functionally a bonding coat. An alla prima painting must be simultaneously a bonding coat & final coat – that's part of their brilliance.

HOW TO MAKE SURE PAINT STICKS

An oil painting is a network of cross-linked polymer long chain hydrocarbons. Each pigment particle ought to be coated in oil to maximise the strength of this skin.

So, don't use too much turpentine or spirit thinners of any kind in your base layer to make a 'wash'. Turpentine and spirit thinners are solvents, not binders – they break down the viscosity of the oil. As the solvent evaporates, it escapes from the paint film leaving behind empty microscopic spaces where the solvent used to be, making the resulting paint film brittle and porous, similar to a dry weak mortar in a brick wall. The resulting layers will lack structural strength if the foundation is weak.

To make a strong underpainting or colourwash on a panel *just paint thinly*. Use any stiff brush. Pull the paint out, work it in, work it thin. You can batter and bash away at a panel with a brush in a way that cannot be done on a canvas. Elbow power is the simple way you paint a lean first coat of paint over which the fat layers lie. Because they are thin, a base coats should dry in about 1½ days.

In moderation, you should use your final oil painting medium to make the base layer paint workable. If you have developed a leaner medium for your base coat, all the better.

But in moderation, you might add a *little* bit of turpentine to that medium to make the base coat more matt.

Also in moderation, you might add a *little* bit of dammar varnish to that medium to give the base coat a bit more gloss.

Don't do both of those, though!

To speed the drying, if you need speed, you can mix any fast drying, lean organic or synthetic iron oxide pigments into your base layer colours like Raw & Burnt Sienna, Mars colours, Indian & Venetian Red, Yellow Ochre, Raw Umber and so forth. Don't use Burnt Umber because, being very lean and drying like a beast, it makes oily paints above it crack.

TOOTH

Your base coat will give your panel the tooth you require. If you want to paint with speed, make your base paint layer rough. You can rag it or scumble it, too. If you want to lay your paint down steadily, feather the newly laid, wet base coat smooth with soft brush like fan blender.