

Painting with Oil Paint Sticks

Oil sticks are a relatively new medium having been in use for about 20 years. Oil sticks are pure pigment that has been bound with highly refined drying oils. A mineral wax is blended to produce a colour in solid form. The first thing to remember is that they are not oil pastels – they do handle differently. What you experience with an oil stick is thick moist oil paint being dragged across the surface that can then be manipulated to achieve the desired effects. They can be considered as either a drawing or a painting medium. They combine the richness of oil colour with the freedom and directness of pastels and charcoal.

They should be applied to a non-acidic primed surface, in the same way as traditional oil paints. The sticks tend to be chunkier, smoother and more translucent than oil pastels. The skin must be rubbed off with a cloth at the tip to begin painting. A new skin will form as the paint stick “cures” after a day or two. For the economy conscious, there is no paint wastage – tubes aren’t drying out because the cap hasn’t been put on firmly, nor is there a dirty palette to clean.



Paint sticks should not be used for underpainting if tube paint is to be applied on top because their high wax content means they dry to a flexible film. If less flexible paint is applied over the top, this may lead to eventual cracking of the paint surface. The actual drying time depends on temperature and the type of surface being painted but on the whole drying time is shorter than for tube paint. *It is recommended that you do not intermix different brands in the same painting, as the chemicals in each may be incompatible*

You can use any medium you would normally use with regular oil paints. With firm pressure you will get great opaque coverage. For transparent effects, add a solvent or medium or dry brush in layers. Colours can be readily blended on the canvas with fingers or a brush. Fine details can be achieved also with the addition of a little oil medium and a brush. If you wish, you may dip the tip of the oil stick into a diluent or medium to achieve a more liquid line. One of the lovely things about using paint sticks is how thick you can layer the paint. You can create ridges and texture, then

with a quick swipe of a finger, smooth it right out and still achieve good coverage. Hence they are suited to broad gestural and abstract painting.

Paint sticks are particularly useful for painting outdoors as there is not the need to carry some of the accessories associated with tube oil paints. They are a bold, liberating medium that is worth a try.

Information Supplied by

Impressions

Picture Framers & Art Supplies
11a Sundial Square, Richmond, Nelson 7020.
Ph/Fax 544 5756

impressions@actrix.co.nz

www.impressionnelson.co.nz