

Dangers of Using Water Based Plastic Paints as Gesso for Oils

1. Can be a low-priced or discount line house paints. These are usually intended for internal plaster walls and therefore are under-bound. Limited adhesion and durability will result. May crack or peel or attract fungus.
2. Flat plastic water-based paints have no chemical reaction “link” with oil paints. They act as an absorption blotting paper only. Leads to poor adhesion, loss of gloss, loss of binder and limited durability. Slow deterioration, peeling, cracking etc.
3. Although acrylics are not prone to bacterial attack, they do absorb and transmit water moisture. This can infect the linseed oil paint and cause bacterial damage to canvas and paint. Also fungal growth.
4. Plastic paints form an elastic “stretch and regain” film when they dry and cure. This conflicts with oil paints which air oxidise and embrittle with age. The result is cracks, distortion, peeling etc.
5. Plastic interior house paints often contain a high level of clay filler to achieve a matt surface. This clay stains and darkens with age. The clays are very oil absorbent and can turn transparent with oil rich artist colours.
The foundation white may slowly become brown or almost fully transparent.
6. High quality “washable” acrylic house paints actually repel oil (e.g. greasy fingers) and often contain silicon slip additives for ease of cleaning up. These additives actually block oil paint adhesion.

Surface Preparation

An often overlooked, but essential step in producing a lasting work of art is ensuring the canvas is clean of any dirt, grease or factory residues. One can never be sure of who or what has come into contact with the surface, even if it is wrapped. Cleaning is quick and easy, but necessary. The most effective way is to moisten a clean rag or sponge with either Art Spectrum No 1 Medium or Reduced Odour Lean Medium and thoroughly wipe the entire surface of the canvas. This has the dual effect of the solvent component “keying” into the gesso to provide a more receptive surface for the subsequent layer of oil paint. (Note, if you intend to paint with an acrylic, you should use solvent only.)

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