

## Key Words in Acrylic Painting

**Acrylic medium** - fluid which can be added to acrylic paint to increase its transparency without reducing its adhesion the way water does. It is cloudy when wet but transparent when dry and fully cured. It's available in matte and gloss and can be mixed with other mediums. Medium can be used as a glue to adhere canvas, or canvas paper to board. (see also acrylic varnish)

**Acrylic varnish** – Some acrylic mediums are labeled “medium and varnish” but are not easily removable and result in an open, porous surface similar to unvarnished acrylic paint. New varnishes have been developed to be applied on top of completed acrylic paintings to seal them. They are removable with solvents without affecting the painted surface below. Some have ultraviolet filters in them. Manufacturers recommend applying a coat of medium as a protective layer before the final coat of removable varnish. Varnish comes in gloss and matte finish. Matte varnish has an additive which must be gently stirred into the product to be effective.

**Adhesion** – the ability to stick to a surface. Adhesion is reduced with the addition of water.

**Gel** - thick medium - Cloudy to opaque white when wet but transparent when dry. It can be added to paint to extend it, give it more body and make it more transparent. It can be used alone to add texture under, or on top of the paint, and as a glue to attach fabric, paper and small flat dry objects to the surface of the painting for texture. It comes in a variety of viscosities and in matte and gloss finish.

**Gesso** – (JESS-oh) Traditionally an opaque white primer to be applied to support in preparation for oil painting. It's not absolutely required for acrylic painting but often used. Some brands are very thick and can develop texture under the painting and to adhere fabric to the painting surface. Acrylic gesso can be thinned with water to the consistency of heavy cream. It has all but replaced traditional gesso for oil painting. More recently acrylic gesso has become available in black and some colours.

**Gloss** - shiny wet-looking finish on paint, even when dry. Can be added to the paint as a gloss medium, or after the work is finished as a gloss varnish.

**Iridescence** - Interference, opalescence, pearlescence. Shimmery acrylic paint and mediums available in a variety of colours and opacities.

**Matte** - flat dry-looking finish on paint. Acrylic paint has a pearl finish straight from the tube but can be made more flat with the addition of matte medium. Matte varnish is also available to change the surface finish of the work on completion.

**Modeling paste** – granular and opaque additive to paint available in a variety of textures. It can be mixed with other mediums and used alone or with paint for creating textures.

**Opaque, opacity** – The opposite of transparent. The inability to see through a layer of paint. Acrylic paint can be opaque or transparent and a variety of gradations between. Opaque paint covers and makes bold changes. Light shapes can be added on top of dark areas with opaque paint. Opaque pigments include the earth colours, ochres, siennas, umbers, the cadmiums, cerulean blue, chromium oxide green. Transparent pigments can be made to appear more opaque with the addition of titanium white or another similar pigment that is opaque.

**Retarder** – an additive that slows drying. Retarder is not always necessary for acrylic painting. The use of too much retarder in an acrylic painting can cause irreparable damage to the work. Some mediums include retarder.

**Support or Ground** - the surface that the painting is on. Almost anything can be used as a support for acrylic painting as long as it's not oily, or waxy. Acrylic paint on oil is not stable and will peel or scratch off in time. Acrylic gesso can be applied to make a support more accepting of acrylic paint but will not improve the adhesion of acrylic paint to an oily or waxy surface. Normally acrylic is painted on stretched or unstretched canvas, heavy paper or wood.

**Synthetic pigment** – Pigments developed more recently than those used by more traditional painters. Most of them are brighter, stronger, transparent and cheaper to produce. They are often used in combination to substitute for the more expensive traditional pigments and sold under the traditional names. Synthetic pigments include phthalocyanine or phthalo blues and greens, quinacridones, dioxazines. Mars colours are synthetic earth colours.

**Texture** – One of the advantages of acrylic paint is the wide variety of actual textures that can be produced either under the paint surface or in it. Transparent gels and mediums can be used to apply paper, fabric, sand and other substances to the painting surface. Opaque modeling paste can be sculpted on the surface and painted over as well as having paint incorporated into it. Products are continuing to be developed to permit even more textures for acrylic painting.

**Toxicity** – Most people think of acrylic as less toxic than oil paint mainly because it doesn't require the use of toxic solvents as oil does. However some pigments used in acrylic paint are quite toxic. So it's still a good idea not to eat acrylic paint or paint it on large surfaces of your body for long periods of time.

**Transparent, transparency** – Clear, see-through colour. Drawing and detail shows through layers of transparent paint. It makes subtle changes in tone and hue. One of the characteristic of acrylic paint is it's transparency. Some pigments are more transparent than others – the phthalos, quinacridones, dioxazines, alizarin crimson, French ultramarine blue, viridian. More opaque pigments can be made more transparent with the addition of mediums, or gels. A large number of transparent layers can be applied on top of each other without lifting in acrylic paint. Transparent glazes usually darken the colour beneath them.

**Viscosity** – thickness. Acrylic paint has the advantage of being able to be purchased and applied in a variety of viscosities from very thin and watery, to thick and juicy. Viscosity can be altered with the addition of mediums or gels.