



Utrecht Art Supplies

Studio Craft: Modifying Drying Rates

Sometimes we want to keep the paint wet longer, and other times it just can't dry fast enough. Here are some strategies for tweaking drying times to suit your pictorial objectives.

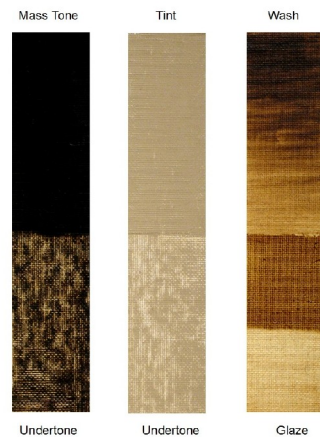


Relatively slow rate of drying is an aspect of oil paint that artists either love or hate. This Rembrandt self-portrait shows masterful manipulation of wet paint to achieve fluid, suave brush work and smooth gradations.

Modern tube oils generally dry faster than historical paint, with less difference in the drying rate across the palette. Slower drying colors can be selected to keep paint surface wet longer (lamp black instead of mars black, for example). For a slower drying painting medium, substitute safflower oil for a portion of the linseed or stand oil. Some artists add essential oil of clove to retard oxidation; this must be done with caution, however, as overuse of clove can lead to a soft, weak paint film.



Painters who work en plein air as well as those who like to build very heavy surfaces often look for ways to accelerate drying.



Colors that are natural driers like raw umber can be added to dark mixtures to gently speed things up.



Oil-modified alkyd mediums can be used on the palette to generally make paint dry faster- sometimes overnight.



Products like Japan Drier are very powerful catalytic siccatives that must be added only in measured amounts- by the drop- to a painting medium according to a tested formula. Overuse can cause darkening, wrinkling and cracking.

For acrylic painters, speeding up drying isn't usually a problem- an electric fan is just about all you'll need. For some techniques, however, it's necessary to slow drying to allow blending and wet-in-wet. A spray bottle with water can be used to mist over the palette or canvas to maintain moisture.



For more consistent, controlled modification of acrylics, retarder gel can be added to mediums or directly to colors on the palette. Retarder gel slows drying while helping maintain normal paint body.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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