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ASK THE EXPERTS

Studio Craft Rinsing Brushes Without Solvents



Q: "Is there a way to clean my brushes after oil painting that doesn't involve solvents? I don't like using turpentine for this."

A: Yes, there are several effective, safe ways to rinse brushes without hydrocarbon solvents. Using solvent alternatives reduces exposure to fumes in the studio and may help preserve the condition of brushes.

1) Vegetable oil: Ordinary cooking oil from the grocery store can be used to rinse brushes both during and after painting. When using vegetable oil during painting, take care to wipe excess oil from tufts to avoid mixing non-drying oil into colors. After painting, rinse brushes well, wipe off excess oil and wash as normal with soap and water.

2) Raw linseed oil: Alkali-refined linseed oil is an economical painting medium that can be used as a brush rinse without risk of affecting colors if some of the rinsing

oil gets on the palette. When doing final cleanup with linseed oil, it's especially important to wash brushes well with soap and water to avoid oil drying in the brush.



3) Citrus-based brush rinse: This type of product is also effective at removing dry paint residue. Similar to vegetable oil, citrus products should not be mixed with oil colors on the palette. Many artists prefer the lighter body of this product as opposed to using a heavy oil. Citrus-based cleaner can remove dry paint residue, but also can soften lacquer on brush handles, so it's a good idea not to leave brushes immersed past the ferrule for long periods.

4) Mineral Oil
Mineral oil from the pharmacy can also be used for rinsing before final cleanup. Due to the risk of affecting drying, mineral oil is not recommended for use during painting, but should just be reserved for a final rinse.

Any brush rinse should be followed by thorough washing with soap and water. Special artist's brush soap is better than ordinary hand soap for this purpose, because brush soap can more thoroughly remove residue from paints and mediums.

IMPORTANT: Rags saturated with any type of oil, including cooking oil, should be held in a lidded metal can with water and disposed of daily to prevent combustion.

