



Utrecht Art Supplies

Ask the Expert: Alkyd as a Varnish?



Ask the Expert: "Is it OK to use alkyd medium as a final varnish?"

A: Alkyds make great painting mediums, but there are several reasons why we don't recommend using alkyd painting medium as a final picture varnish. Alkyd tends to impart an irregular, high shine that can make lighting and displaying art difficult. It can sink into "fat" passages, leaving dull spots.

Another reason alkyd isn't well suited for use as a picture varnish is because a dry alkyd film can't easily be removed for future cleanings. Any method that could remove dry alkyd would likely have a destructive effect on the paint beneath.

Because the behavior of alkyd is similar to that of drying oils, it tends to perform best when mixed with pigments. In a paint film, pigment functions as an aggregate, like sand and gravel in concrete- it gives structure and helps reduce dimensional changes as the film ages.

The best products to use for protecting finished art are synthetic resin solution varnishes. These tend to remain optically clear and neutral in color, and retain flexibility over time. Synthetic varnishes can typically be removed with less aggressive solvents, facilitating easy and safe cleaning of the picture for future collectors. Many

varnishes also help protect paint against the destructive effects of UV light exposure and prevent dust and contaminants from penetrating porous surfaces.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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