



Utrecht Art Supplies

Studio Craft: Paint and Storage Temperatures



Ask the Expert: “What temperature is best for storing paints? Maximum and especially minimum. I’m typically storing paints in a space maintained at 40-50 degrees, but it also gets hot in the summer. Am I OK to keep my supplies in these temps?”

A: Art materials manufacturers take measures to ensure stability in transport and storage. Because of this, artists’ colors in well-sealed containers can be stored within a wide range of typical indoor studio temperatures.

Oil paints have incredible shelf stability in a very wide range of temperatures. Even decades-old tubes of paint often remain suitable for use if kept well-sealed. While we don’t recommend storing paint in the freezer, artists have told us that they have used previously frozen oil paint with perfectly normal results. Oil paints generally keep just fine in a hot studio, but uncapped colors may skin over faster in high temperatures.

For acrylics, the cool temperature range you describe is OK for storage, as long as it doesn’t drop very much colder- acrylics should never be allowed to actually freeze. Glycols in the paint formula which help moderate coalescence also act as a weak “antifreeze” but glycol

concentration can diminish in older, previously opened acrylics in jars.

Even though cold (above freezing) temperatures won’t harm acrylic paint in storage, the studio temperature may need to be raised before you actually use them. Acrylic paints, mediums and primers kept in cool storage should be warmed above the Minimum Film Forming Temperature (MFFT) prior to use. For most acrylic/latex dispersion paints and mediums, this is about 10 degrees C or 50 degrees F.

Storage in warmer conditions won’t necessarily harm the paint, but it can encourage mold growth in old, half-full jars of acrylic colors and mediums that have lost antimicrobial potency. Lysol household spray can be applied to retard mold growth in jars. (The active ingredient *orthophenyl phenol* is sometimes used as a preservative in latex paints.) Apply a light spray, just enough to cover the paint surface and cap tightly.

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