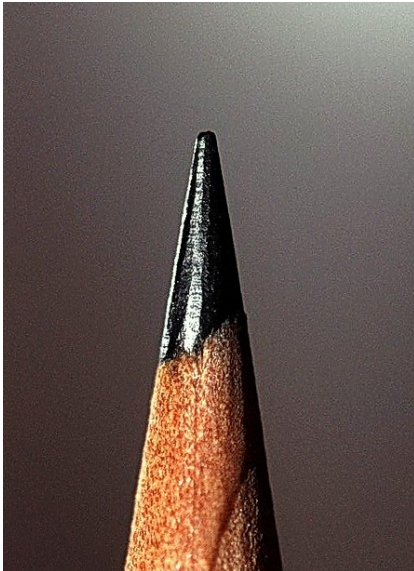




Utrecht Art Supplies

Studio Craft: Graphite under Oil Paint?



"Is it OK to use graphite on canvas before painting? I've heard it can crawl through oil paint and will eventually show through."

Graphite particles don't migrate through an oil paint film, but the material is denser than charcoal and can mix readily with paint, staining light colors in the first application. Also, as paint ages and becomes increasingly transparent marks underneath may become more visible.



Graphite in mineral form

Once graphite is integrated into a dry paint film it should be stable, unless the graphite application is so heavy some unbound, loose particles remain.



Image: Albert Bierstadt, "Lake Lucerne" 1858

How do we know graphite doesn't migrate within a paint film? Albert Bierstadt used a graphite-based oil ground for many of his paintings and, while the pictures may have darkened slightly, the ground color has not asserted itself through the actual paint. Unfortunately graphite proved not to provide a very good surface for oil paint adhesion, and Bierstadt eventually switched back to lead white grounds.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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