



Utrecht Art Supplies Animal-Free Art Supplies



Q: I am a vegetarian watercolorist who is trying to eliminate animal-based products from my studio. I know some makers of watercolor use ox gall- do you? Are there very many animal-based pigments? Do you raise rabbits for your Rabbit Skin Glue? Any information you can share would be much appreciated!

A: We're always happy to help artists who are migrating away from animal-based art materials and seeking out substitutes!

Both Utrecht brand watercolor and gouache are 100% free of ox gall across the entire assortment. We used to include it in one item in the watercolor line, but that was eliminated with the reformulation several years ago. Vegans will be glad to know we don't use honey either. It's important to note, however, that not all pigments in these lines are animal-free. Ivory Black and Payne's Gray both contain an animal-derived pigment, so you'll want to avoid those. (Ivory Black is derived from animal bone as a by-product of the meat industry)

In other paint lines, mixed grays often include Ivory Black so make sure to check the label. Also, you'll want to be aware that the binder in

some traditional Asian watercolors and inks hide glue.

Most of the other animal-based pigments have been out of use for a long time. The insect-derived color Carmine/Cochineal is not commonly used for artists' colors these days, having been replaced by synthetic-organic pigments. Real carmine pigment is not included in our gouache assortment, but it can still be found in some foods and cosmetics.

Rabbits are not raised exclusively for glue production, but Rabbit Skin Glue is an animal-derived product. Many artists who are migrating away from animal-based art materials are now using the modern replacement Acrylic Canvas Sizing, which offers many of the advantages of the traditional glue in a more convenient, more durable product.

With some of the synthetic chemicals used in art materials, it's not always possible to be 100% sure whether they are made from animal fat. (The synthetic paper sizing AKD is one example.) For this reason, unfortunately there are not very many European-style watercolor papers we can be absolutely sure are animal free. Ones which have a non-gelatin, starch based sizing (like Canson 100) are reliably animal-free. Many Asian papers are produced without sizing, so you may discover some good options in that category as well.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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