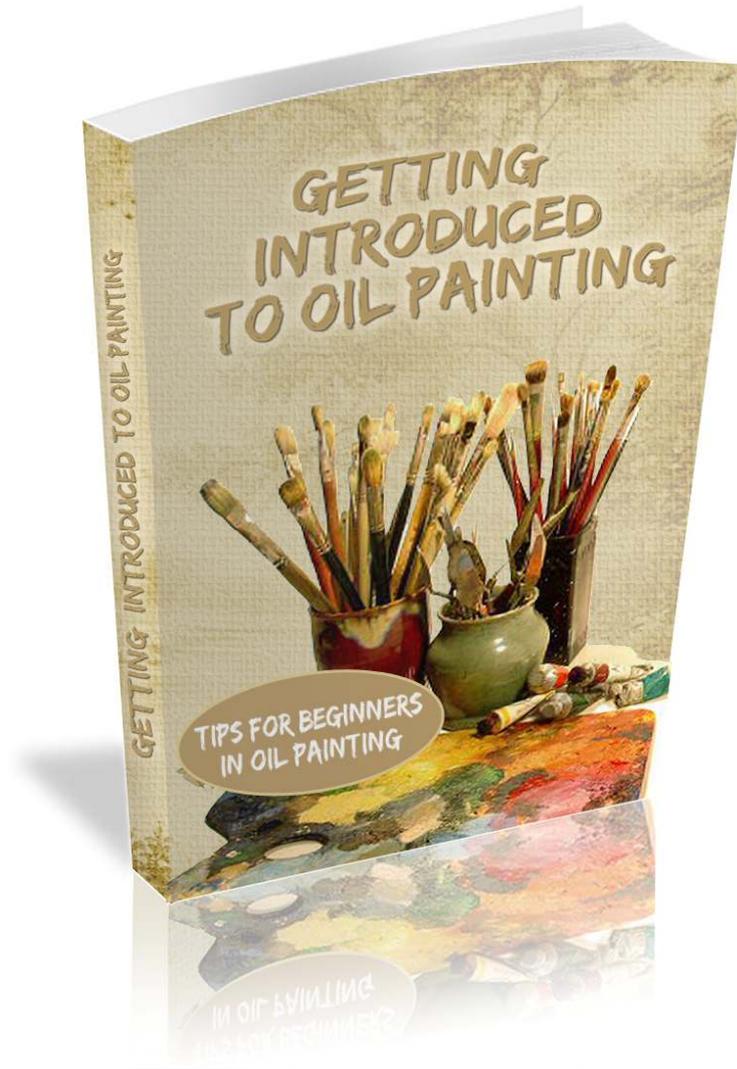


Getting Introduced To Oil Painting



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Chapter 1: Brief History of Oil Painting

Oil Painting is a fairly new form of art. It is the process of painting with the use of pigments that are bound together with a medium of drying oil, particularly in early modern Europe, the linseed oil. This usage of oil in combination with other pigments to do painting counts back to 1400. There have been many variations in the art form of oil painting from that era to today's date. But the basics remain the same.

In Europe, fifteenth century was considered as the transitional period. It was at this time, that some scope of reality was visualized in art forms. Art was undergoing a huge transformation from the ornamental and mythological style of the middle age, to a period of rebirth and revival. This also marked the beginning of Renaissance.

There grew a sense of realization among the artists, who began to understand the mathematical laws and this led to a bunch of budding artists who were keen in portraying sincere and realistic things in nature. These artists initiated the use of 'nature' as an inspirational source for their paintings.

1.1 Story of Invention

It was at this time when Jan Van Eyck (1395-1441), a northern renaissance painter wished to portray nature in detail in his paintings. He wanted to bring forth every bit of scenic beauty to the canvas through his painting brush. Painting nature in a way that it looks scenic and lively was not an

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easy task. But, Van Eyck was determined to depict nature in its true self in his paintings.

It is said that 'necessity is the mother of invention'. Jan Van Eyck soon realized that if he needs to accomplish his desire to paint nature's beauty in detail on his canvas then he would have to bring some improvements in the technique of painting. This zeal drove him to discover a type of paint that can bring liveliness to the canvas. And Van Eyck became the inventor of oil painting.

In the early years, Van Eyck and other oil painters did not purchase ready made colors. They usually got the pigment from the natural sources such as plants and minerals. They also added a binder to it to form a paste that would allow them to paint. Initially, the binder used was egg, and the resultant end product was tempera paint, which had the tendency to dry very quickly. This quick drying property did not allow smooth transitions while shading. But smooth transitions were essential to achieve the effect of reality that Van Eyck attempted to portray. Therefore, Van Eyck initiated the use of oil instead of egg. Oil worked as a perfect binder and it gave results to the satisfaction level. Oil when used as a binder had several benefits. Besides having a slow drying time, it also lends a glossier look to the painting. With oil painting, an artist can apply even the tiniest detailing on the canvas with the help of the brushes.

Since the era of Jan Van Eyck to today, there have been several changes in style and medium used for oil painting. In the next chapter, I will tell you about the different forms of oil painting mediums that are now available to present day's oil painters.

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Chapter 2: Introduction To Oil Painting Mediums

Oil painting is an incredible medium in itself. However, to bring forth more creativity in the art form, different modifiers can be used to change its behavior. Usage of oil painting mediums is indeed a matter of taste, and not just requirement. There are several artists who don't use any paints at all, except a little oil to make the right consistency of the paints, as some are very thick. Different artists may differ about their opinion on the quality and effectiveness of the oil painting mediums. Before using an oil painting medium, artists must keep the following things in mind:

- ✓ Read all the warning labels
- ✓ Always work in a well-ventilated area
- ✓ Wear gloves on your hands to protect the skin

Different oil painters swear by different mediums of oil painting. Some of the most popular oil painting mediums used for this form of art as the following:

2.1 Linseed Oil

Linseed oil derived from the seeds of flax plant. Linseed oil had a different role to play in the history, than it has today. It was originally, used just as a final varnish on paintings done using egg as the medium. But, today linseed oil is used as an effective binder in oil paints. It dries thoroughly and forms a stronger paint film. The slow drying property of the linseed oil allows the paint to stay in a workable state for long. However, a disadvantage of using linseed is that, it tends to turn yellow with time. Therefore, some painters avoid using it with colors of lighter shade. Some of the common forms of linseed oil available in the market today are discussed below:

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2.2 Different Forms of Linseed Oil

2.2.1 Cold Pressed Linseed Oil

This form of linseed oil is made by extracting oils from raw flaxseed. The extraction of oil is done with the use of pressure and not heat. Thus, the linseed oil created is the purest form. Apart from using the cold pressed linseed oil as a binder in oil paints, it can also be utilized as a medium to thin oil paints. This helps in heightening the gloss and transparency. This also reduces the visibility of brush stroked, creating a smooth flow in the painting. This form of linseed oil generally results in a low yield, and thus this oil carries a heavy price tag.

2.2.2 Steam Pressed or Refined Linseed Oil

When the seeds of the flax plant are steam heated and then pressure is applied to it, it tends to yields more oil. This makes refined linseed oil more affordable binder for the use of the artists. The steam heating procedure used to create oil from the flax seeds produces more waste. This waste needs to be removed by using a refinement process. The linseed oil extracted is then treated with an acid, which helps in removing the waste materials. This acid is neutralized with the use of an alkali solution. The refined linseed oil thus formed can be used as a medium in oil paints to improve its brilliance and transparency.

2.2.3 Sun Thickened Linseed Oil

This is a thicker form of linseed oil that is generated using the heat of the sun. To produce sun thickened linseed oil, equal amounts of linseed oil

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and water are mixed together in a container and left in direct sunlight for several weeks or more. Eventually, water and linseed oil separate forming thicker oil, having consistency like that of honey. This sun thickened linseed oil is not used as a binder in oil paints. Instead, it is used as an independent medium to improve the flow and shine. This form of linseed oil has a tendency to turn yellow and also speeds drying.

2.2.4 Stand oil

It is also a thick bodied medium just like the sun thickened linseed oil. When linseed oil, kept in an air-tight container, is heated at a very high temperature, it results in a very thick oil form with a honey like consistency.

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Chapter 3: Varied Techniques of Oil Painting

3.1 The Early Oil Painting Techniques

When Turpentine was not discovered, as a thinning material for the oil paints, the oils had not become the main media of art work for the masters of the oil painting medium. In the beginning times, the oil paints were created by mixing and blending the pigment powder with the oils. This however didn't provide effective results and the artists at times just shunned their use. However, once the art of mixing turpentine became popular, this technique was popularly accepted and used among the oil painting artists throughout the world.

3.2 The Conventional Ways of Using Oil Painting Techniques

The conventional oil painting artists make use of the similar oil painting techniques which is the "fat over lean" technique, to get the result much similar to that of the old oil paint masters. Some of the variances however occur, but these are the steps, while layering several thin coats of the oils, the latter which gets the slightly thicker one, remain consistent.

You can transfer the composition to the oil paint surface by making use of the grid, photocopy and a carbon paper. You can also do it by simply drawing it on canvas board with a light pencil or using some diluted paint on a little brush. You can apply a thin and transparent coat of medium toned-paint over the complete oil painting work. The traditional oil painting artists usually call this *imprimatura*, and it usually includes the white, umber and black paints all blended together. The

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next layer of the oil paint achieves the perfect contrasts and highlights.

3.3 The Additional Techniques of the Ace Oil Painting artists

The oil painting techniques that are generally used mostly include the additional texture as well as the oil painting mediums to the oil paint that is required to give it more of the body and texture, or is used to reduce the drying times. When this is added to the thick texture mediums, the oil paint is sometimes applied with the use of a palette knife. This is done to achieve the best type of texture, as is the case with the impasto techniques. These additional techniques help the artists in getting the best effects out of their paintings.

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Chapter 4: Alternative Oil Painting Mediums

Linseed oil is the most popular form of oil painting medium used, but it has several disadvantages too. The most refined and pure form of oil painting is too costly. Apart from that, linseed oil also has the tendency to turn yellowish with time, thus cannot be used as a medium for paints of lighter shade. Linseed oil also has a slow drying property, which may be good for some painters, while others may find this troublesome.

Due to the properties of linseed oil, there developed a need for an alternative for linseed oil and due to this, we now have more oils in the market that can be used as mediums for oil painting. Beginners in oil painting should opt for the alternative forms of oil painting mediums as they are less costly and they don't have the drawbacks of linseed oil. Some of the most popular forms of oils used as an alternative for linseed oil are:

4.1 Poppy Seed Oil

Poppy seed oil is a popular form of oil that is used as an alternative medium. This form of oil is extracted from the seeds of opium poppy. The main characteristics of poppy seed oil are that it is a pale and slow drying oil. It is less likely to turn yellow with time when compared with the linseed oil. Poppy seed oil is often used as a medium for paints with lighter shades such as whites, blues and other pale colors.

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4.2 Safflower Oil

Safflower oil is very much similar to the poppy seed oil as they both are both suitable for whites and other lighter shade of colors. This form of oil has lesser tendency to yellow with time when compared to linseed oil.

4.3 Walnut Oil

Walnut oil is yet again another popular alternative used. It is pale oil that assists in making the paint more fluid. It also has a good drying ability. This form of oil has less of a propensity to yellow with time when compared with linseed oil. Walnut oil should be stored properly; else its properties can be damaged.

4.4 Liquin

Liquin is a yet another popular oil painting medium. There are many artists who swear by it. Liquin is a good alternative to linseed oil and is definitely worth a try if you haven't worked with it before. Liquin oil is known to perk up the flow of oil and the alkyd colors. This oil also helps in subtly blending the paint and maintaining the fine details. It is also known to speed up the drying time and it serves as an excellent medium for glazing.

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Chapter 5: Things Required To Get Started in Oil Painting

This is the most important thing that the beginners need to know - the things required to get started with oil painting. Well, to get started in oil painting is quite easy. There are some basic supplies that you need to get from the market. You needn't invest too much initially in buying very expensive oil painting supplies. Start with basic things when you are a beginner. Just be careful that you buy good quality supplies, don't get the cheap ones as they would hamper the learning process. Here is a list of basic things that you would require to begin your journey of oil painting:

- ✓ Support
- ✓ Oil Paint
- ✓ Oil Painting Mediums
- ✓ Oil Painting Brushes

5.1 Supports

The first and foremost thing that a beginner requires to get started with oil painting is support. There are several types of supports available in the market that can handle oil paints, but for the beginners canvas is the best. Some beginners often question whether a canvas needs as a special coating or priming to hold oil paints. The simple answer is 'yes'. But, you needn't worry too much about that. The local art supply stores will have canvases that already have a special coating to be used for oil painting.

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5.2 Oil Paint

Next, you would require some good paint. Good paint doesn't necessarily mean the expensive ones. There are many reasonably priced and good quality paints available in the market. Try out some of the good brand oil paints such as WINSOR & NEWTON Winton Oil Colours, and GRUMBACHER Academy Oils to name a few.

Those who are scared about the potential hazards while using oil paints, needn't fear at all. There are water miscible oil paints available in the market. These paints can be safely thinned using water, as opposed to those using solvents like turpentine.

5.3 Oil Painting Mediums

After paints, comes the medium. Some of the common questions among the beginners regarding mediums are as follows:

What are the mediums?

Is it required to mix the oil paint with anything or can it be used straight out of the tube?

The answer is that - you don't require mediums to paint with. The mediums are not a requirement, but they are quite helpful.

Most of the oil paints are simply too stiff if used straight out of the tube. Therefore mediums are used to dilute the oil paint, and this helps to make the paint flow better. Moreover, it also saves money by avoiding wastage of the paint. Different forms of mediums are available in the market. You can choose anyone depending on the several factors like speeding up the drying time, improving the gloss, etc.

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5.4 Oil Painting Brushes

Oil painting brushes have a major role to play in oil painting. A good quality brush not only makes learning an enjoyable experience, but also makes you a better painter. Invest in a good oil painting brush. Cheap brushes available in the market, usually have the tendency to shed hairs and get stuck to the oil paints. This can be annoying and this makes it difficult to clean the brushes too. Thus buy a brush that is neatly crafted for creating good paintings.

5.4.1 Tips for ensuing longer life of oil painting brushes

Different types of oil painting brushes: There are many types of oil painting brushes available in the market. Don't get baffled by the choices. As a beginner, you do not need too many brushes to do oil painting. Just two types - flats and filberts would be enough. Here are some tips that would help you in choosing and maintaining the oil painting brush for their longer life:

- ✓ Always get a brush made of hog's hair, and not the softer synthetic hair brushes. This is because the synthetic brushes are too fragile to handle oil painting medium.
- ✓ Always clean your oil painting brushes well. There are some painters who recommend turpentine for cleaning the brushes. But, if you can invest some more, then get a good oil painting brush cleaner and preserver. This helps in ensuring a longer life of the brushes.

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Taking good care of your oil painting brush will not only ensure its longer life and also give better results.

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Chapter 6: Basic Know-How's of Oil Painting

6.1 Know How to Create the Forms

In the world of painting, there are basically five basic forms, on the basis of which other types of forma are created. These forms include cone, cylinder, sphere, cube and doughnut-shaped torus. The entire forms of part of these forms combine to make the entire forms that we see. For example, if you imagine a half sphere and a cone, it gives you the formation of a tear drop from the eye.

It depends on the oil painting artists on how he uses these shapes and creative forms to his best purpose to create the best effects. Each of the above mentioned creative forms has its own particular distinctive dark and lighter shades. The flats as well as the cube surface formations are also the blends used for oil painting formations. Spheres are usually determined by the ovals and the crescents. The cones shapes and formations used in the painting and other art forms have triangular dark and light value shapes.

The cubes on the other hand have flat and evenly blend surfaces. The cylinders are stripes, and truses are crescents and stripes. The concave versions of all these different forms have the similar kind of values and shapes, without the reflected light.

6.2 Matching and Blending the Colors while Painting

Blending and matching the right colors are very important to ensure that the painting looks real and reflects the real words as far as possible. If

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you are planning to use colors, then take the rainbow as your inspiration. It has all the basic colors that are visible in the world. The popular rainbow color combinations include red, red-violet, red-orange, orange, yellow, yellow-green, green, yellow-orange, blue-violet, blue-green and violet.

If you use the right matching and blend of color for all the objects in your painting, the possibility of getting a real time painting gets doubled. You must also keep in mind that the shade and the matching of the colors also depend upon the proximity in which the objects are. Although the color of a leaf is the same, the distance in which the objects are may make a difference in the color of the object.

6.3 Effects of the shadows in oil painting

The shadows that are used in the oil painting forms are specifically divided broadly into three different categories. The first form is the shadow side of an object that is simply known as a 'Shadow'. Then there comes the cast shadow, which is formed due to the absence of light and is caused due to the environment in which the object is. The third effect on the other hand is caused when the objects touch or almost touch with each other.

6.4 Contrast forms used in oil painting

Contrast is usually defined as the basic relationship between the lightest light and darkest dark, on an object, or in an environment. This depiction that takes you from a darker to a lighter shade is known as contrast and it plays a major role in sharpening your oil painting if used in the

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right way. The objects that are depicted as farther from the scene are mostly depicted as a greater in their contrast. If the object or the values are closer then they are usually on a lower contrast. The objects that are high on the contrast usually seem to appear much closer. Whereas when the contrast is low, they seem to appear much farther away. The distant cliffs for example have a comparatively smaller range of values, and hence they have less contrast than the cliffs that are situated close.

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Chapter 7: Taking good care of your Oil Paintings

If you like oil painting then you must make yourself aware of all the various ways by which you can take good care of your oil painting. Here are some of the important points and suggestions that can help you understand how to take good care of your oil painting items as well as how to ensure that your oil paintings are in good state and are preserved for years to come.

In order to create a long lasting work of art it is important that the oil paints are mixed along with the linseed oil pigments to create hard-wearing works. The oil paint can be used to apply thinly, or quite thickly. The various kinds of application will actually help in determining the quality of the final oil painting. The oil paints are evenly applied to the canvases that are stretched over the basic wooden frame.

To ensure that the oil paintings created by you are long lasting and good for years to come, it is important that your paintings are properly framed. Although you may use glass frames to properly frame your work of art, the oil paintings are better when framed without the glasses.

The framing of the painting actually serves to twang the painting, and wrap the edges of the painting canvas. This explains why some of the modern artists of today choose to display their oil paintings without putting any frames, keeping intact the plainness of the final art work. While glass is actually used in order to protect the painting from any type of dust, it makes the oil painting work harder to appreciate by viewers and this can even at times lead to damaging the delicate surfaces of the art work.

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It is also important to protect your oil paintings entirely from the damaging effects of the environmental factors. We are all aware of the damaging effects of the environment and have noted the before and after effects of the images of oil paintings, which have been cleaned, and you can see the damage that has been incurred upon by the smoke and air pollution. Try to avoid any kind of smoke near the oil paintings, and also try to restrict the use of the candles and incense sticks in the room where you have displayed the oil painting works.

Remember to regularly clean and dust your oil paintings works. You may use any form of soft and clean brush, like a nice paintbrush for example. You may also keep the work of your art dust free with the use of a low power vacuum, with a hose and attached with a brush. If you have an oil painting that is extremely dirty, then you can use warm water along with a tiny amount of the mild detergent to make it clean. You may use a clean and soft cloth to blot the oil painting gently after washing. The regular dusting of the oil painting will put off the need for any further cleaning, and is a significant part of the caring for the painting artwork.

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Chapter 8: Tips For Beginners in Oil Painting

Beginners should pay special attention to this. Before getting started with the oil painting, ensure that you have the favorable conditions required for it. Here are some things that you need to keep in mind before you start on with oil painting.

8.1 Lighting

The room where you do your oil painting should be well ventilated to let lights stream into it. If there is no proper lighting then you would find it difficult to accurately see the colors. The best form of lighting is sunlight, so try to paint in a well lit room or paint outside. If getting sunlight is not possible then use proper lightings that are the best alternative for sunlight.

8.2 Safety

Safety is yet another prerequisite for those getting started with oil painting. Oil paintings can be hazardous for beginners if you are not careful. Therefore, it is very important to take the required precautions while doing oil painting. Here are some safety tips for you:

- ✓ Ensure that the place you work in is well-ventilation and has good airflow.
- ✓ You must also wear disposable latex gloves while doing oil painting.
- ✓ Remember to read all manufacturer's instructions and warning labels carefully.

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8.3 Final Words from the Author...

While you are learning oil painting, take it as a fun and enjoyable experience. Remember! You are only taking the baby steps now. Learn to have more patience and always keep your cool... Don't be very judgmental about your own work, learn from your mistakes. Don't be hopeless, even if, your first, seconds, third paintings don't turn out to be expected, don't be frustrated. Oil painting is indeed a slightly difficult medium to master, so just hang in there...and keep trying.

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