



## Utrecht Art Supplies Acrylic Paints and Issues of Permanence



**Ask the Expert: "I read an article online about the intensive efforts needed to repair an acrylic painting at a museum. The piece was about 30 years old, and it seemed like it was in really poor condition. Is this a problem with acrylics in general? Should I worry about the paintings I've done in the past?"**

It's easy to feel anxious reading conservation literature, but modern professional artists' acrylics have been proven totally reliable and suitable for permanent art. Remember, conservation literature often deals with art objects made using untraditional materials, assembled in non-standard ways, sometimes displayed in a destructive environment. House paint, for example, might be considered "acrylic" for purposes of conservation, but not all paints called "acrylic" are equal, or made of the same materials.

Styrenated acrylic co-polymers (commonly used in house paints and in some lower quality artists' colors) are not as durable as 100% acrylics when used for artistic painting. Utrecht Professional Artist's Acrylics are made of 100% acrylic polymer dispersion base, according to tested formulas which include dispersants, glycols, antimicrobials and other components that ensure a stable, workable product that dries to a durable film.

It's also important to remember the role craftsmanship and care of the finished work play in ensuring overall

durability. Most instances of acrylic paint failure involve some sort of technical malpractice like applying gesso in cold temperatures, layering with incompatible materials or displaying and storing finished art in bad conditions.

Artists are sometimes surprised to learn that acrylic paintings can be vulnerable just like historical mediums. Stains can migrate from poorly prepared supports, dirt and contaminants can penetrate a porous acrylic film, and freshly applied acrylic paint and gesso can become brittle if allowed to coalesce in a cold (below 50 degrees F) environment. This doesn't mean that acrylics are defective or prone to "self-destruction". It means that achieving durable results with acrylics requires knowledge and skill just as with any other medium:

- Only paint or prime with acrylics when temperatures can be kept above the minimum film forming temperature (MFFT)
- Allow finished art to completely coalesce in temperatures above MFFT (about 2 days for moderately thick film)
- Avoid excessive dilution with water when working on non-paper supports where film strength is most important
- Select professional-grade colors made using 100% acrylic dispersion base
- Choose colors with high lightfastness ratings
- When working with less lightfast, transparent colors, reduce the chance of color change by avoiding light tints and very thin glazes.
- Top-coat finished art with a synthetic, solvent-borne picture varnish. This will facilitate safe cleaning and isolate paint from dirt and contaminants.
- Products with UV light stabilizers can help reduce color change and other damage from light exposure

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#).

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