



## Utrecht Art Supplies Clear vs Original Acrylic Gesso



**Ask the Expert: "I'd like to know more about clear gesso. Is it archival like the white kind? Can you use it just the same as the original?"**

A: Most of the time, when artists say "archival" they mean "durable to the standards of permanent art". By that measure, yes, painting grounds sold as "Clear Gesso" are suitable for permanent painting. Whether such products offer the same optimal texture and absorbency as white acrylic dispersion painting ground (AKA "acrylic gesso") is a different question.

Clear Gesso was developed to allow painters to incorporate the texture and color of support materials like wood and linen into their artwork, while still enhancing permanence by isolating the support and optimizing paint adhesion.

The word "gesso" is Italian for chalk or plaster. In historical painting, it referred to the chalk priming layer applied to wooden panel supports. In modern painting, it refers to an acrylic-based, one-step sizing and priming mixture that contains calcium carbonate (chalk) to impart absorbency and texture.

Since Clear Gesso doesn't contain as much pigment or calcium carbonate as original-formula gesso, strictly speaking it's probably more analogous to acrylic matte mediums than to heavy-bodied white gesso. That's not necessarily a bad thing- acrylic paints and mediums, while not expressly made to accept oil paint, generally work pretty well for this purpose, especially when oil paint is applied thinly.

In terms of isolating and protecting painting supports, Clear Gesso performs as well as white gesso of comparable quality, and it does include ingredients to give texture and absorbency. We think higher proportions of pigment and calcium carbonate make original, heavy-bodied white gesso the ideal choice for thicker, fatter oil paint, but Clear Gesso works great for most applications.

Since acrylic colors and mediums don't require an absorbent ground to achieve strong adhesion, clear gesso should work with practically any thickness and weight of acrylic paint.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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