



Utrecht Art Supplies Product Profiles: Old Paint



Ask the Expert: "I found some old tubes of oil paint and would like to know how old they are and if they are still good. The label says "Utrecht Linens", some say "New Temp" and a few of them say "Rhenish Oils". Are these still OK to use? Also, is Rhenish a type of oil paint? Thanks!"

A: Tubes that bear the old "Utrecht Linens" company name are decades old. We began manufacturing acrylics in 1957 and launched our Professional Oil Colors in 1960 (previously our oils were "Rhenish" brand manufactured for us in former West Germany).

New Temp was the original Utrecht line of acrylics. Due to their age these will almost certainly no longer be suitable for permanent painting and might not even be soft enough to squeeze out of the tube. Acrylics depend on amendments, coalescents and antimicrobials to

maintain shelf stability. These compounds can lose potency in storage.

The Rhenish Oils might still be usable. There is no definite shelf life for artists' oil colors, but they can last for years if tightly capped with no air in the tube. While linseed oil is at its peak strength when fresh, it's not uncommon to find 20+ year old tube oils that are still fit to use. If the tubes feel pliable and the paint seems to have normal fluidity, it's likely OK to use. Paint that feels unusually stiff or that is hard to squeeze out should not be used. Some free oil at the top of the tube (even some leakage around the cap) is normal for paints stored for a long time and is not a sign of diminished quality.

If the paint is simply plugged with dry material at the top but otherwise soft throughout, it's possible to carefully cut open the tube and scoop out any still-usable paint... even though that's not exactly how we prefer artists to have their first experience with Utrecht Professional Oil Colors!