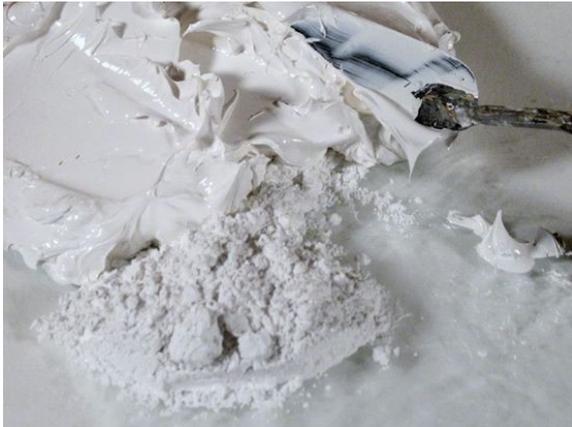




Utrecht Art Supplies

Adding Fillers and Textural Inclusions to Paint



Ask the Expert: "What is the best way to add extra fillers to oil paints, and what should I use? I'm thinking marble dust, chalk, clay or sand. Can I just mix it in on the palette?"

A: There are a number of materials that can be added to oil paints to modify texture and increase volume. Anything used as a filler should be inert and stable; avoid materials that decompose or react adversely with the paint vehicle. Marble dust, chalk, clay and sand have all been used in artistic painting for a long time. The Cubist innovator Braque, for example, used sand and sawdust for textural effects.

Adding filler means changing the proportion of solids to vehicle, so it's important to use only the minimum effective amount, and observe for signs that the paint is becoming too thick, desiccated or crumbly. Excessive use of filler can lead to underbound paint, with reduced film strength and lower adhesive power. (A crude test for film integrity can be performed by painting a sample of the mixture on a flexible sheet of plastic like Mylar. When the sample is dry, the sheet can be flexed to reveal splitting or peeling.)

When adding solids to paint, the desired result is a homogeneous mixture, with no lumps of dry matter. It's practically impossible to achieve this

by mixing powders directly with paint on the palette. A better approach is to combine filler material with the mixing white, and to use the modified white to impart the desired consistency to color mixtures. Mix a batch on a glass slab or palette using a stiff putty knife until all visible dry clusters have been reduced. Work with a glass muller for even better consistency. Large batches can be stored in collapsible aluminum paint tubes.

Especially when working with heavy, textural paint, preparation of the ground is very important. The priming layer needs tooth and absorbency to help heavy paint attach durably. Braque recognized this and was known among his peers to be particularly careful in support preparation. On the subject, Braque was quoted as saying, "The priming is at the basis of everything else, just like the foundations of a house."

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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