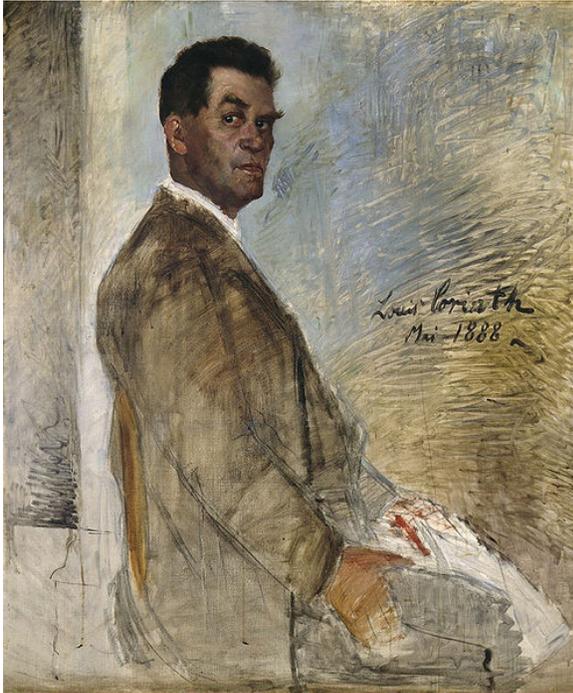




## Utrecht Art Supplies Incorporating the Ground Into a Painting



*'Portrait of Franz Heinrich Corinth, the Artist's Father' by Lovis Corinth, 1888*

**Ask the Expert: "I like the look of the white priming showing through, especially in the background of my paintings but the acrylic gesso looks different enough from my paint that it stands out. Is there a way I can get a better look while still using the priming as a part of the painting?"**

A: The canvas provides the first visual elements in any painting- the edges provide the first four lines in the composition, and the ground is the first color. A beautiful painting ground can be handled with the same sensitivity as colors on the palette, and can become a very effective element of color and texture.

When the ground is revealed in a finished painting, it shares something about the artist's process, providing a record of how the painting was constructed. Often, brushstrokes applied

swiftly over the ground have a "broken", textural quality that can provide contrast against suave, smoothly rendered passages. This contrast can be used to emphasize or draw the eye toward important visual elements.

One important issue to consider when elevating the painting ground to importance as a visual element is the degree of apparent difference between the priming and the paint. Acrylic Gesso has a distinctly different look from oil paint- matte and dry as opposed to shiny and wet-looking. Some artists leverage that difference to emphasize painted passages against the ground, or to create the impression of space or distance through contrast of textures.

If the goal is to fully integrate an acrylic ground into the look of the painting, there are ways to give it an appearance similar to oil paints. An acrylic-primed canvas can be top-coated with a light imprimatura of oil or alkyd primer; once dry, the top coat will appear and handle more like an oil ground.



For a more immediate solution, a light veil of thinned oil paint can be rubbed into an acrylic ground to impart more richness and depth, while preserving the texture of the original priming layer.

Questions? [Ask the Expert](#)

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