

# PAINTING GROUNDS AT OPUS

*This handout summarizes the oil and acrylic painting grounds, both traditional and contemporary, which are available at Opus. For information on how to apply specific grounds please ask our staff for product information.*

**GAMBLIN Ground:** This ground makes a strong, bright foundation for oil paintings. Formulated from alkyd resin, titanium oxide and barium sulfate, it makes canvas and linen stiffer than acrylic gesso and more flexible than traditional oil primers. It has good tooth and opacity, and because it is so rich in white pigment, only two coats need be applied (more coats may be added for a smoother surface). Fabric painting surfaces should be sized prior to applying oil painting grounds with either PVA size or Rabbit Skin glue.

**GAMBLIN Poly Vinyl Acetate (PVA) Size:** PVA size is diluted with distilled water and is a contemporary size for fabric supports. Conservation scientists recommend painters use pH neutral PVA size on linen and canvas instead of rabbit skin glue. PVA provides a layer which seals the fabric but does not re-absorb atmospheric moisture, and therefore, does not swell and shrink like rabbit skin glue. Gamblin PVA has a neutral pH and does not yellow. It also retains its flexibility and does not emit harmful volatiles.

**GAMBLIN Rabbit Skin Glue:** This is a traditional size for fabric support. Conservation scientists caution painters that animal skin glue absorbs atmospheric moisture on damp days and therefore swells or expands; it gives off moisture on dry days and shrinks. According to the Smithsonian Conservation Lab, this movement of the size layer over the changing seasons can cause aged oil paintings to crack.

**GAMBLIN Traditional Gesso:** Gamblin Gesso makes a traditional absorbent ground kit for painting oils on wood panels. "Gesso" is Italian for gypsum which, when mixed with distilled water and animal glue, makes a luminous painting surface. Gamblin Traditional Gesso contains dry mixes of rabbit skin

glue, gypsum, marble dust and titanium dioxide. These dry mixes allow the oil painter to make up small batches of rabbit skin glue and gesso as needed. It is recommended that four coats be applied to both sides of thin or poorly braced panels. This gesso is too brittle to use with fabric supports and is best used on rigid supports such as wood panels.

**GOLDEN White Absorbent Ground:** Absorbent Ground is an acrylic liquid surfacing medium, uniquely formulated for unsurpassed absorbency when dry. It dries to a porous paper-like surface. Applied over regular gesso, it allows for watercolour effects on a rigid panel or stretched canvas. This product is designed for staining and watercolour-type applications. It is lightfast, permanent and flexible. Painting in an impasto style over the Absorbent Ground is NOT recommended, unless the surface is properly sealed. When finished your final watermedia work be sure to seal the art work with a fixative or clear coat so that the absorbent ground does not continue to absorb moisture, dirt and dust from the atmosphere.

**GOLDEN Gesso:** Golden acrylic gesso is formulated with an acrylic polymer emulsion, yielding a sandable film with excellent flexibility and chemical, water and UV resistance. It offers a good tooth for adhesion of subsequent paint layers. This professional grade, contemporary gesso is available in white or black.

**GOLDEN Acrylic Ground for Pastels:** Golden acrylic pastel ground is formulated with 100% acrylic polymer emulsion, yielding a film with excellent flexibility and chemical, water and UV resistance. It is used to prepare surfaces for use with pastels. Provides a tooth similar to sabretooth pastel papers designed specifically for use with pastels. Pastels and any other dry media used on this ground should be sprayed with a fixative when finished.

**FREDERIX / HY-JO Dry Gesso Mix:** A mixture of calcium carbonate, titanium dioxide and animal glue for combining with water for a true gesso ground. It is

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applied in successive coats and sanded in between to create an absorbent ground for use with oil paints. Recommended for use on rigid supports. Can also be mixed with linseed oil for use on canvas.

**OPUS 100% Acrylic Primer:** Opus Acrylic Primer is a conservation grade product. It is made with pure acrylic resin emulsion and titanium white pigment. It has good long-term flexibility and non-yellowing characteristics. An economical primer for acrylic and oil painting mediums. It may be thinned and cleaned-up with water. Non-toxic.

**STEVENSON Gesso:** Compounded from acrylic emulsion and titanium white pigment. When dry, this gesso produces a non-absorbent surface for acrylic and oil painting media, which adheres well to most porous surfaces. May be thinned and cleaned-up with water.

**STEVENSON Hide Glue Sizing:** This traditional sizing is prepared by mixing the contents of the container with water and heating it in a double boiler. It is then applied to the canvas with either a brush or palette knife. Hide glue is not intended to be applied as a coating but rather as a penetrating liquid that fills pores and in effect isolates the canvas from coming into contact with any oil paint. Once isolated or sized the canvas is ready to be painted with an oil-based ground.

## NOTES:



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