

# SOLVENTS & THINNERS

*Solvents and thinners are used for thinning paints to a working consistency, diluting oil painting mediums, dissolving varnish resin crystals and waxes, cleaning paintings for the purpose of restoration, and general studio clean-up. They are called a solvent when used to dissolve solids such as a varnish resin crystals, and a thinner when used to dilute liquids such as painting mediums. Solvents such as turpentine and mineral spirits are naturally based products, whereas paint thinners are most often synthetic variations. It is best to use naturally based solvents and mediums with oil paints, and more economical synthetic thinners for general studio clean-up. All solvents and thinners should be used in a well-ventilated area, even if classified as "odourless". The following information outlines some general types of solvents and thinners but does not cover all the products which Opus stocks.*

## **Citrus Thinner:**

Citrus thinner is a citrus distillate and a by-product of the manufacture of citrus peel liquor. It has a yellowish colour and a slight lemon/orange odour and is classified as an "extra mild" thinner (or one that is not as strong as turpentine). It is best used as a turpentine substitute for thinning paint and cleaning brushes but it is not strong enough for dissolving damar resin crystals. Citrus thinner speeds the drying time of oils. Citrus thinners are more environmentally friendly than pure turpentines and are useful for people with chemical sensitivities. Toxicity Rating: not available. Combustible.



## **Mineral Spirits:**

Mineral Spirits is a petroleum distillate with properties similar to turpentine. Some artists prefer mineral spirits to turpentine because it leaves no gummy residue, it does not deteriorate with age, it is cheaper, and it causes no apparent reactions in people sensitive to turpentine. Mineral spirits can be used as an oil painting medium in place of turpentine, but like Citrus Thinner, it cannot be used in recipes containing damar as it will not completely dissolve the resin. Mineral spirits can also be used to clean brushes and other tools. It is also manufactured as "Odourless Mineral Spirits." Toxicity Rating: Skin contact - moderate; Inhalation - moderate; Ingestion - high. Combustible.



## **Paint Thinner:**

Paint thinners are synthetic variations of natural based solvents such as turpentine or mineral spirits. For this reason they are more suitable for clean-up than for use as a solvent for mixing with paints or mediums. Toxicity Rating: Not available. Combustible.

## **Turpenoid:**

Turpenoid is classified as a petroleum hydrocarbon and is essentially the same as Odourless Mineral Spirits. It can be substituted for turpentine in all painting functions which do not include damar solutions or damar resin crystals. For artists who do not like the odour of turpentine or who are sensitive to it, Turpenoid is a practical alternative for paint thinning and general clean-up. In addition, although it has no apparent smell, it should still be used in a well-ventilated area. Toxicity Rating: Skin contact - moderate; Inhalation - moderate; Ingestion - high. Combustible.

## **Turpentine (or Pure Gum Spirits):**

Turpentine is the traditional material for diluting oil paints. Artists should use only pure gum turpentine for oil painting, which is manufactured from pine tree

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resin and carefully distilled. Industrial grade turpentine, which is generally available in hardware stores, is produced from tree stumps and contains impurities and a strong, unpleasant odour. For any recipes containing damar, for making painting mediums and varnishes, turpentine is the appropriate solvent and the only solvent which will dissolve damar crystals. The gummy residue of turpentine left after evaporation is harmless, though turpentine is best when it is fresh. Toxicity Rating: Skin contact - moderate; Inhalation - moderate; Ingestion - high. Flammable.

## NOTES:



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