

CHAPTER 12:

PREPARATORY STEPS AND PROCESSES FOR MIXED-MEDIA AND OTHER PAINTING GENRES

Contributed by

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INTRODUCTION

Mixed media art is defined broadly by Hobbs (1985) as covering all those works that defy the traditional use of material and methods, combining two and three-dimensional approaches in executing a single work of art. Its application and processes are broad in scope. It has no specific material and it uses different substances and objects as material to produce a work of painting with a very good visual effect. Contemporary painters mix their media by attaching objects to their canvases (Fichner-Rathus 1998). Adams (1997), and Adams (1999) state that mixed media involves making use of found objects which are taken from everyday sources and incorporated into a work of art. There are different types of mixed media art. They include collage, assemblage, installation, wet and dry media art. Collage involves pasting and gumming of weightless objects such as paper to a flat surface to form a composition. Sayre (1997) situates that collage is an all-inclusive medium.

Mixed media painting

Mixed media painting technique is a technique or style of painting that combines two or more mediums or art forms to create a work of painting. Hagger (as cited in Adjei 2007) defined mixed media art as the use of different painting materials such as watercolour, crayon, oil, Indian ink, or similar combinations on a single support.

In mixed media, different media or materials are used to create unique visual art. It is an art form that doesn't place restrictions on people who do not know how to draw. Elements such as paper, wood, sand, fabric and others, are added to the support before painting. The addition of another element to the painting helps to create interesting texture and colour that can be incorporated into the painting. mixed media painting can be done either on wood, board or canvas. Materials used for mixed media painting include Wood panel, Colour, Paint brushes, Pallet knives, Water for mixing paint, Cotton cloth – for cleaning paint drops, Colour palette, Scissors, Sand, Stick, and Glue. While preparing to execute a mixed-media painting there are important factors to consider; support with which to make art, materials to work with, and a work space.

Steps in surface preparation for mixed media painting

In painting, "support" refers to the physical surface or material upon which a painting is created. The support serves as the foundation for the artwork and can significantly affect the final appearance and durability of the painting. Different types of supports can be used in painting, and they can include: Canvas, wood, paper, metal, Masonite and fabric. Surface preparation refers to the various methods that can be used to treat the surface of a material prior to coating application, the use of adhesives and other procedures. Surface preparation can be done either chemically or mechanically to clear the surface of pre-existing coatings, residue, surface imperfections, organic matter, oxidation and other contaminants. Various surface preparation techniques are used to prepare substrate material such as aluminium, concrete plastic, steel and other alloys and wood. There are different methods of

surface preparation for different materials and applications. They tend to follow some set stages.

Stages in preparation of a Support

There are several stages that are followed to successfully prepare a surface for adhesion, coating, welding or other procedures.

- Surface condition assessment
- Remove old coating
- Remove oil, chloride, Acid and other surface containments
- Remove loose parts of the surface
- Profile the surface
- Dry the surface

Surface preparation ensures that a material is ready to receive a coating, be adhered to another material or other similar surface-related application. A dirty, oily, flaking surface can greatly reduce the effectiveness of a new coating, cause adhesion failure or undermine the process. Surface preparation work to ensure good bonding, adhesion or weld quality. It also helps to militate against later problems such as corrosion and mechanical damage.

Steps in priming a surface for acrylic

Decide how the texture and colour of the surface should be.

- This will determine your choice of gesso and whether it will be tinted with acrylic paint or not.
- If a canvas is being used, then it should be stretched and stapled onto the stretcher bar to ensure a tight surface for painting.
- Thin the gesso with water to ensure a smooth and even finish for the surface.
- Use a soft bristled brush or roller for smooth, application of gesso.

Preparatory Steps and Processes for Mixed-media and other painting genres...

- Cover the entire surface evenly.
- Use a palette knife or coarse brush for a more textured finish on the surface
- Glue other material you wish to use for the mixed media.
- Apply your colour where it is necessary until you are satisfied with the colour and the result
- Allow to dry frame. Show photos and label them

Priming a surface for oil Colour Painting

Priming your surface for oil colours is similar to the methods used for acrylics, with very small differences. When preparing the surface of a canvas, the following steps are observed. Sizing of support is a process that fills holes or pores on the surface of the canvas, to stop or prevent leaking. The sizing of a surface is done using glue. It is important when painting with oil colour as the oil can rot the surface over time if it comes into direct contact with the material. Sizing will primarily act as a sealant for the canvas surface. Once the size has dried, the ground (or gesso) can be applied on top to create texture, provide a uniform base colour and alter the level of absorbency of the surface, as well as give an extra layer of protection for the surface.



Plate 1: Emulsion paint.
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Plate 2: Top bond. ©
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Plate 3: Stretched canvas. Photo Credit: Chinonyelum Okonkwo

Importance of preparing a surface.

Preparing the support before embarking on a painting is a crucial step in the artistic process, holding profound importance for the outcome of the artwork. This preparatory stage serves several key purposes, each contributing significantly to the quality, longevity, and aesthetic appeal of the final piece.

Firstly, preparing the support ensures a stable and durable foundation for the paint to adhere to. Whether it's canvas, wood, paper, or any other surface, applying a proper ground, often in the form of gesso or primer, creates a uniform and slightly absorbent surface. This not only prevents the paint from seeping into the support, which can compromise colours and detail but also offers a consistent texture for the artist to work on. It minimizes the risk of the support warping or deteriorating over time, a concern especially relevant in the case of canvas.

Secondly, the choice of support preparation can influence the overall aesthetic of the artwork. Different grounds can yield various textural qualities, from a smooth and crisp surface to one with a more pronounced grain or tooth.

Moreover, preparing the support facilitates the painter's control over the medium. The absorbency and texture of the prepared surface can affect the flow of paint, the blending of colours, and the ability to layer and manipulate the medium.

In essence, the preparation of the support is the foundational step that ensures the success of the entire painting process. It safeguards the artwork against deterioration, enhances its visual and textural qualities, and empowers the artist to bring their creative vision to life with precision and control. It's a critical, albeit often overlooked, aspect of the artistic journey, one that elevates a simple canvas or panel into a receptive and enduring canvas for artistic expression.

Meaning of Gesso

Gesso is the most common ground for preparing a surface to paint on. It can be applied to almost any surface and will stiffen the substrate as it dries, readying the surface to accept paints. Acrylic gesso is the most common kind and is suitable for painting with both oil and acrylic. Though, for oil painting the surface should be sized or sealed before applying gesso. The most traditional and common gesso is white gesso which gives artist a bright, neutral surface to begin their painting from.

Example of gesso is as follows:

(1)- Liquitex super heavy gesso primer.

This help to create a sculptural effects on the canvas especially when applied with a coarse brush or palette knife.

(2) - Liquid Gesso Primer-This helps to achieve a smooth surface for painting

How to create a mixed absorbency surface

Prepare your surface-

Start with any substrate and follow the necessary procedures required for pre-painting. For example, watercolour paper needs no preparation but can be primed with gesso to add strength, cardboard, canvas and wood panels do not need any preparation if they are already sealed and primed. If the substrates are raw wood with no sealer or primer, they will need some preparation.

Apply surface grounds:-

Apply acrylic binders to your surface, such as gels and pastes. Absorbent surfaces are always matte, which is one way, one can tell if a surface is absorbent or not, it will have tooth and rough surface. Glass or metal are normally glossy and non-absorbent

Choosing a binder

Mediums are generally pourable and fluid, gels are thicker and create textures, and pastes are also thick and create texture. Gloss mediums and gloss gel create a non-absorbent area on the surface. Matte medium and matte gel create a semi-absorbent area. Choose a binder of your choice, and apply it thickly on the surface.

Over-paint the custom surface

Once the surface is dry, over-paint it with paint. It is important to dilute the paint

before using it. One should use the correct items to dilute according to the medium one is using. For example, Dilute with water for watercolour and acrylics. Dilute with solvent for oily colour. Then apply the diluted mixture over the dry surface.

Mixed absorbency surfaces

Try making a mixed surface by using three or more products. Pick at least three binder products to apply an absorbent one, a non-absorbent one and a middle absorbent one. Apply products all over the substrate. Overlapping products provide a surface with a variety of absorbency that will produce a surface with different effects

Summary

Mixed media includes all forms of art that use more than one material in their composition. Mixed media painting is a creative area of study in which anybody who is interested can easily learn and do. It involves the combination of two or more media to make a work of art. One of the most common methods of mixed media art is the process of collage, in which pieces of paper and other substances are combined to make a new two-dimensional image. Another method is an assemblage of all sorts of found objects and combines with other mediums to create a new object in three dimensions. According to Rooney (1999) and Sayre (1997), installation is the art of arranging or assembling 3-dimensional objects or using paint and other media directly onto a wall or a floor. There are different steps in mixed media and each of the steps is followed in order to produce a good output. Also, there are different surfaces, surface preparations and ways of application of material for mixed media painting.

Questions

What is mixed media painting?

What are the materials used for mixed media painting?

What are the steps in mixed media painting?

Why is it important to prepare a surface before painting?

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