

# Painting

by Sophia



## WHAT'S COVERED

There are several kinds of paint available for art, and an artist may choose a type of paint for very specific reasons. In this lesson, you will learn the characteristics, including the advantages and disadvantages, of the following types of paint:

1. Oil Paint
2. Acrylic Paint
3. Watercolor Paint
4. Tempera Paint
5. Encaustic Paint

## 1. Oil Paint

Paint is a combination of a **pigment** (color) with a **binder** (liquid that keeps it together). When the paint is applied to a surface, the binder helps the particles to adhere, or stick to, that surface. Eventually the binder evaporates to leave only the pigment behind.

**Oil paint** is a pigment suspended in an oil-based binder, usually linseed oil. Linseed oil comes from flax seeds. Oil painting emerged as the preferred paint of choice in Europe during the 15th century. It is relatively easy to work with, holds color well, and is easy to combine with other colors. The artwork produced with oil paint will often last a long time if proper precautions are taken while working with it.

↪ **EXAMPLE** Here is an example of an oil painting by Matisse:



Henri Matisse (1869 - 1954)

*Woman with a Hat*

San Francisco, California, USA

1905

Oil on canvas



#### TERMS TO KNOW

##### **Pigment**

Fragments of color, usually ground minerals, sometimes also plant dyes or synthetic colors.

##### **Binder**

Liquid substance that holds pigments together and helps them adhere to the surface of the painting.

##### **Oil Paint**

Type of paint that uses linseed oil (usually) as a binder.

## 2. Acrylic Paint

**Acrylic paint** is a relative newcomer, emerging during the 1950s. It is a pigment suspended in a synthetic, or artificially made, binder. The emergence of acrylic paints allowed for experimental types of artwork to be produced that were not possible with oil paints because of their much slower drying times. Acrylic paint dries quickly and was the paint of choice for artists such as Jean-Michel Basquiat, who used it along with oil sticks, ink, and even photocopies to create paintings that resembled graffiti and other forms of street art.

⇒ **EXAMPLE** Here is an example of an oil painting by Basquiat:



Jean-Michel Basquiat (1960 - 1988)

*Untitled (Skull)*

Los Angeles, California, USA

1981

Acrylic and oil stick on canvas



**TERM TO KNOW**

**Acrylic Paint**

Type of paint developed in the mid-20th century that uses synthetic polymers as binders; very fast drying compared to oil.

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### 3. Watercolor Paint

**Watercolor paint** is pigment suspended in a water binder. Water-based paints are much easier to clean up, are easily blended, and allow for a translucency, or near transparency. This translucency is very difficult to achieve with other types of paint, even when thinning them down. Some artists find that they produce a more natural or realistic color effect. This can be open to interpretation, particularly with objects such as water or the sky, where the colors tend to fade into each other.

⇒ **EXAMPLE** Below are two examples of watercolor painting. Notice how the technique and results are very different. The watercolor from India is more opaque, so it is difficult to see the paper underneath the pigment. The painting by Paul Klee is more translucent. You can see how the artist created a wash by mixing watercolor pigment with water and applied it in a thin layer, so you can see the paper underneath.



Artist unknown

*Krishna talking with Yudhishtira and his brothers*

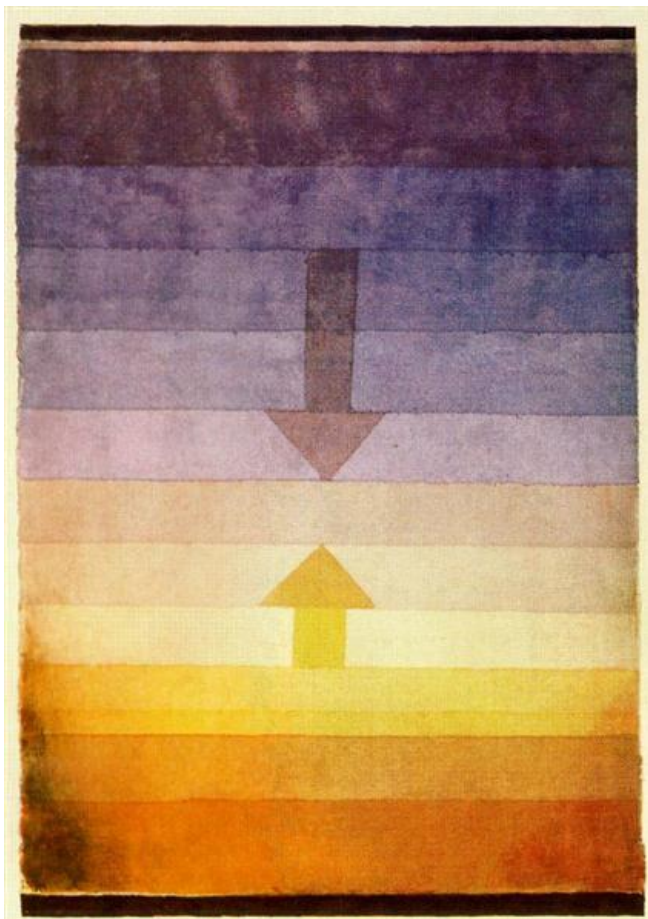
Himachal Pradesh, India

1750-1800

Opaque watercolors on paper

Probably an episode from the *Harivamsha*





Paul Klee (1879 - 1940)

*Separation in the Evening (Scheidung Abends)*

Private Collection

1922

Watercolor



#### TERM TO KNOW

##### Watercolor Paint

Type of paint in which the pigment is temporarily suspended in water.

## 4. Tempera Paint

**Tempera paint** is pigment suspended in a protein binder, typically egg yolk or milk casein, or milk protein. It's one of the earliest types of paint used, and it tends to produce a nice glossy finish. Long-lasting and durable, tempera paint is used in Fresco Secco, which is painting on dry plaster. The binder in the tempera paint helps moisten the plaster to create adhesion.

⇒ **EXAMPLE** Below are two examples of tempera painting. The Chinese painting is on the exterior of a series of carved wooden brackets that hold up the roof of a temple. The color blue was used to symbolize the heavens, and the paint helps protect the wood from rotting.



Artist unknown

*Dongyue Temple, detail of tempura painting on exterior*

Beijing, China

14th century





Georges Lacombe (1868 - 1916)

*Vorhor, the Green Wave*

Indianapolis, Indiana, USA

1896

Tempera



#### TERM TO KNOW

#### Tempera Paint

Type of paint that uses egg yolk or other protein as a binder.

## 5. Encaustic Paint

**Encaustic paint** is pigment suspended in a beeswax binder. It is also one of the earliest types of paint.

Interestingly, in order to work with it, the artist uses hot metal tools to help manipulate and blend the wax, rather than the typical paint brush. The earliest examples of encaustic painting are the Fayum mummy portraits from Egypt, dated between 100 and 300 CE.

⇒ **EXAMPLE** Below is an example of an encaustic painting:



49

Artist unknown

*Mummy portrait of a young woman (Fayum)*

Antinoöpolis, Middle Egypt

2nd century



TERM TO KNOW

Encaustic Paint

Type of paint that uses beeswax as a binder.



## SUMMARY

Paint is a combination of pigment, or color, with a binder, a liquid that keeps it all together. There are several different kinds of paint, and each has its own characteristics. In this lesson, you learned about the advantages and disadvantages of **oil paint**, **acrylic paint**, **watercolor paint**, **tempera paint**, and **encaustic paint**.

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## TERMS TO KNOW

### Acrylic

Type of paint developed in the mid-20th century that uses synthetic polymers as binders; very fast drying compared to oil.

### Binder

The liquid substance that holds pigments together and helps them adhere to the surface of a painting.

### Encaustic

A type of painting that uses beeswax as a binder.

### Oil

A type of paint that uses linseed oil as a binder.

### Pigment

Fragments of color, usually ground minerals, sometimes also plant dyes or synthetic colors.

### Tempera

A type of paint that uses egg yolk as a binder.

**Watercolor**

A type of paint in which the pigment is temporarily suspended in water.