

Watercolor on Cradled Panel

Attach watercolor paper to a Cradled Birch Panel by American Easel

You will need:

- An American Easel
- Birch cradled panel
- Paint for the edges
- X-acto knife
- Paint brush

Use blank watercolor paper or a finished painting — either will work. An advantage to attaching first is that your paper will stay perfectly flat while painting.

ATTACH A FINISHED PAINTING

Step 1

PROTECT THE ART

To protect your painting while you work, seal the finished watercolor with *Golden Archival Varnish with UVLS*. It may take as many as seven coats to seal the paint so it will not lift. Use gloss when spraying several layers or when covering gold leaf or other reflective surface. Building up layers of gloss will not obscure your art. A top coat of semi gloss will knock down the shine, if desired. Let this dry completely.

Step 2

CONSIDER THE EDGES

You can leave the sides of your panel clear to let the wood grain show or paint sides with acrylic. Some artists stain edges with watercolor before sealing the wood.

For a clear finish, cover the wood edges with 2-inch blue painters tape to avoid watercolor stains.

Another option is to paint the sides with acrylic *before* attaching paper to avoid taping.

Or wait to trim oversized paper and the flange will protect your painting while you coat sides with acrylic.

Or apply your top coat first, let it dry and you can simply wash away any paint that gets on the painting.

Step 3

SEAL THE WOOD SURFACE

Apply two thin coats of *Golden GAC 100* to the top surface. This is necessary to prevent acids in the wood from yellowing the art over time. Brush it on and dry for a couple of hours. All these acrylics clean up with soap and water.



Golden Archival Varnish with UVLS aerosol



Golden GAC 100



Gel medium either matte or gloss

ACRYLIC MEDIUMS

Golden makes top quality, archival products. NOVA gels and paint are equally good at wholesale prices, available online:

Tips on what to watch out for — see Rene’s Blog!



Step 4

ADHERE ARTWORK

If possible, cut your paper a bit larger to overlap the Panel on all sides. Coat both the back side of the paper and the wood surface with an acrylic gel — I use Soft Gel. It’s important to allow time for the paper to relax BEFORE you attach it. The liquid in the acrylic will stretch the paper and applied too soon it will form air pockets instead of lying flat. Use just enough gel to form a good bond and avoid using excess that would pool in a lump or squeeze out. Position the art (or blank paper) accurately. This is easy if the painted area is larger than the panel. Press art onto cradle. Cover with a sheet of acrylic to protect the art, then gently press outward to remove air bubbles. Wipe off any excess gel around edges. Check position. If the art is a hard surface such as an aquabord panel, tape it into place so it will not move. Top with several heavy books. Before it dries completely, check to be sure the surface is flat.



Step 5

TRIM PAPER EDGES

Place the art face down over a cutting surface. Use an X-acto knife to trim paper along edges of Cradled Panel. This is easiest with thinner weight paper — take care to cut heavier paper straight. Sand with extra fine sandpaper to even surface irregularities

ATTACH BLANK PAPER

Starting with blank paper you can skip sealing the surface first but you’ll want to be careful not to get any acrylic on the top surface or watercolor paint will not absorb. Design the painting carefully since you will not be able to crop it later. If you’re not happy with the painting you can always cover it with a watercolor ground and start over. Or you can attach a new piece of paper over the old painting.

USING A GROUND

An alternative to using paper is to coat the wood panel with a watercolor ground. For this you still want to seal the surface as in step 3. Then paint surface with a commercially available ground such as Golden’s Absorbent Ground or Daniel Smith’s Watercolor Ground. You can either paint it on with a brush or use a 6-inch foam paint roller from the hardware store. Several coats may be needed. Allow to dry completely between coats and before beginning to paint.

NEW! WATERMEDIA PANELS

Without question, the very easiest way to paint watercolor on a panel is to use American Easel’s WATERMEDIA PANELS. They have taken all the work out of it for you. The surface comes ready to apply paint and you’ll just finish with acrylic when you’re painting is done.



Finish Watercolor with Acrylic

Follow these easy instructions to protect and enhance your watercolor paintings without using glass.

As with any art process, plan to experiment with these techniques until you perfect them.

WHEN TO USE GLOSS

I prefer the look of a slightly matte finish to a high gloss, but there are good reasons to use gloss at times. When coating gold leaf or other shiny surface a matte finish will dull that glow. Use gloss to preserve it. Avoid a matte finish when you're layering several coats of acrylic. Remember the old non-glare glass that was so frosted it obscured your art? That's what several layers of a mat finish can do. But just ONE layer of semi-gloss or matte on top of many layers of gloss, will tone down that shine, if desired.

© René Eisenbart

Step 1

PROTECT THE ART

Seal your finished watercolor thoroughly with *Golden MSA* (Mineral Spirits Acrylic) Archival Varnish with UVLS. Hold the can 8 to 12 inches from your surface and keep it slowly moving as you spray back and forth vertically, covering every part, following with a horizontal layer for one coat. Let dry between coats for 15 minutes or more. Seal well enough so paint will not lift when wet. Watercolor painted over acrylic mediums will

seal easily because of the acrylic base while untreated watercolor paper will take multiple coats.

Let this dry completely. Properly applied, the varnish will protect your painting when you apply the top coat.

Golden MSA Archival Varnish with UVLS aerosol



Step 2

APPLY TOP COAT



Use *Golden Top Coat with UVLS* to protect your art. I use semi gloss unless the painting has metallic or iridescent properties. Many companies make acrylic gels but this one has UV protection built in. It is more archival than museum glass because your art is completely

sealed while glass only protects the top. Thin with a little water to make an even, flat coat that will not become gummy, especially helpful on larger panels.

Brush side to side. Let dry.

A second coat, brushing up and down gives a canvas-like texture.

If you've applied adequate varnish the watercolor paint will not lift or run. If it does, try wiping away that part, then reapply after it dries. Wipe extra gel off edges.

Golden Top Coat with UVLS



Step **3****FINISHING YOUR EDGES**

Remove any tape. Sand lightly. Stain or paint Panel edges with acrylic paint, taking care to keep the paint off the art surface. Or go with the natural look and finish the wood with a polyurethane varnish.

Step **4****ADD HARDWARE**

Attach a couple of “D” rings. I usually put them about a quarter of the way down from the top, usually on the INSIDE of the sidewalls where it won’t scratch other frames when stacked.

Mark the location with a pencil and drill the holes before installing the screws.

Attach framing wire, enough to overlap and wrap on each side, and VOILA! It’s ready to hang.

TIPS, TRICKS & CONVENTIONAL WISDOM

Test with art that is not precious before risking your best work.

Photograph your paintings before you coat to get the best image. It’s harder to get a good photograph through acrylic layers or a glossy varnish.

Create a dust-free, no-pet zone for working with acrylic. Covering your work surface with plastic will help keep both art and surface clean.

Apply gels with an inexpensive synthetic paint brush or an old credit card. Do not use good watercolor brushes (it will ruin them) or crumbly foam brushes.

Acrylic mediums clean up with water and gentle soap. Keep a jar of water to dip your brush in or wrap the brush in plastic if you cannot clean it right away. Keep lids sealed when not in use. Removing excess gunk from lids will make them open easier.

Always spray the MSA varnish outdoors and use a mask — it is toxic. Use several thin layers to seal your paint so it will not lift.

Because paper is porous, it might take up to seven coats — especially with thick or dark pigments. Varnishing before mounting will help protect the art during the mounting process. Also available in liquid form for airbrush application.

Be aware of stretching and shrinkage of paper when mounting with acrylic. If the paper has not fully relaxed before applying, it can bubble against a rigid surface. When fully stretched, a great deal of surface tension is created as it dries. This can buckle a backing that is not entirely rigid.

Use weight — old garden encyclopedias work — to hold paper securely to the panel. Check for buckling before the acrylic dries and you may still be able to smooth surface wrinkles. Cover with a protective acrylic sheet and rub with your hands, lift and replace a corner if necessary.

While mounting, make sure you have art lined up straight with the backing. Use sheets of acrylic or wax paper to keep art from sticking to other surfaces such as the books used for weight.

Allow artwork to completely dry and each under layer to dry before adding more acrylic as moisture trapped within will not escape and could bubble or remain opaque.

Reserve matting agent for the last coat. It’s OK to build up several layers of gloss but multiple layers of matte or semi-gloss will begin to obscure the art.

AN ALTERNATE FINISH

DORLAND’S WAX is another product you can use to seal your artwork. It has the advantage of not being water based so you can apply it over your finished art without spraying with varnish. After rubbing many coats it gives your painting the feel and look of an encaustic painting and it will protect your art from moisture. The downside — it does not add UV protection.

