

# Traditional Painting Construction

The following working methods reflect my current painting approach. The approach is based on the “indirect” painting methods used by the old masters.

## Preparation:

Surface: Fine portrait-grade Belgian linen

- linen is sized w/ rabbit skin glue and double lead primed
- linen is glued (archival) to Baltic birch panel or better yet - Dibond. The linen is the weak link due to its tendency to fluctuate - compress and contract. This fluctuation will cause weakening, cracking, and delimitation of paint layers. A rigid substrate (panel) will eliminate 95% of the problems of deterioration of a painting over time. Stretched cloth is not a good surface for the longevity of your painting.

## General Rules of Thumb:

- Fat-over-lean (high oil content layers over lower oil content layers - Think jelly on top of peanut butter - not vice versa)
- More importantly: Transparent over Opaque - local color layers in early states should be opaque due to the natural tendency of oil paints to increase in transparency over time.
- All layers should have a high-pigment content
- The less layers the better
- Thin layers are better - be reserved with thick impasto.
- Avoid resins in your paints and mediums - they should only be oil based.

Layer	Medium	Pigment Characteristics	Technique	Brush
Tone linen	Mineral Spirits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light fastness of pigment – High Only</li> <li>• very transparent layer</li> <li>• warm earth tone to suite the individual paintings needs (umbers, transparent red oxide, terra rosa, yellow orche, etc.)</li> </ul>	pigment heavily thinned with mineral spirits & rubbed over surface & wiped off. Often i lay a paper containing pencil drawing of the composition on top. I then trace the image and “lift” the pigment from the linen surface- leaving a “negative” drawing artifact. The purpose of this layer is to serve as a guide of composition for the layers to come.	rag
Under Painting (Grisaille)	Mineral Spirits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light fastness of pigment – High Only</li> <li>• warm earth tone to suite the individual paintings needs (umbers, transparent red oxide, terra rosa, yellow orche, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pigment heavily thinned with mineral spirits &amp; roughed in loosely</li> <li>• fairly transparent layer</li> </ul> The purpose of this layer is again to serve as a guide of composition for the layers to come.	Large brush or rag
First Pass - local color block-in -the “blurred stage”	Oleogel or Venetian Medium & VERY little Mineral Spirits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light fastness of pigment – High Only</li> <li>• Opaque Pigments</li> <li>• Local colors mixed to match your vision</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opaque pigment layer - slightly thinned with mineral spirits yet high in pigment content (to retain opacity)</li> <li>• layer is roughed-in loosely</li> </ul>	Large brush
Second Pass - refined local color	Oleogel or Venetian Medium & VERY little Mineral Spirits	Light fastness of pigment – High Only <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opaque Pigments local colors mixed with medium for a slightly thicker and sometimes passage (large brush)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pigment viscosity slightly adjusted with Oleogel or Venetian Medium &amp; mineral spirits &amp; roughed in loosely</li> <li>• more opaque layer in the lights – maintain transparency in the darks</li> </ul>	Large or medium brush

Third pass - refined local color	Oleogel or Venetian Medium & Impasto medium	Light fastness of pigment – High Only  local colors mixed with medium for a slightly thicker and sometimes passage (large brush)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• pigment viscosity slightly adjusted with Oleogel or Venetian Medium roughed in loosely</li> <li>• more opaque layer in the lights – maintain transparency in the darks</li> </ul>	Smaller brushes and/or palette knife
Glazing	Oleogel or Venetian Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light fastness of pigment – high</li> <li>• very transparent layer</li> <li>• warm earth tone to suite the individual paintings needs (umbers, transparent red oxide, terra rosa, yellow orche, etc.)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glazing is a method of adjusting the values and temperatures of dried painting passages.</li> <li>• A glaze is typically a darker pigment placed transparently offer a lighter opaque layer of paint.</li> <li>• The glaze layer is a very thin transparent veil placed over the top of a dried painting.</li> <li>• The glaze is composed of a small amount of pigment suspended in Oleogel or Venetian Medium.</li> <li>• The glaze is applied (either universally or selectively) to the dried underpainting.</li> <li>• The glaze is then carefully and slowly removed via a soft rag until the desired effect is achieved.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft brush</li> <li>• Small for specific areas</li> <li>• Large brush for entire surface</li> </ul>
Scumbling	little or no medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Light fastness of pigment – high</li> <li>• most typically this layers is a lighter pigment placed over a dried dark layer of paint.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• very opaque dry layer applied in a “broken” manner as to allow previous layers to “scintillate” through</li> </ul>	Various types of brushes - often old beat up brushes work great.
Oscillate back and forth between glazes and scumbles to achieve the desired values, temperatures, and textures.				
Varnishing with Gamvar	none	none	Wait until pigments are completely dry – follow product instructions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Soft brush</li> <li>• Large or medium</li> </ul>