

## Ocean View Arts

# Care of Oil Painting Brushes

New oil painting brushes should be dipped in turpentine substitute before use to remove the sizing, which is put on the brush to stiffen it and keep the bristles in place when shipping. Dry thoroughly with a rag or paper towel. All painting students should include a roll of paper towels or several rags in their painting supply kit.

### **Use paper towels or old rags for cleaning brushes:**

\* Paper towels: The least expensive paper towels are the best, since they are less soft and therefore fewer fibers flake off onto the brushes.

\* Old rags: old terry cloth washcloths or pieces of towels are excellent. They should be washed by machine with a laundry liquid or powder that is effective in removing oils, such as Shaklee Basic L Laundry Liquid.

\* *NOTE: used paper towels or rags should NEVER be left in a car for long periods as they may be combustible.*

**While** using brushes in class: First, clean your brush by wiping all the paint off that you can with paper towel or rag. Only dip it into turpentine substitute if it is absolutely essential to remove all or most of the paint (for example, if you need to change from painting with a darker value to a lighter one.) It is preferable to keep your brush as free from turpentine substitute as possible while painting.

**After** using brushes in class: First, clean your brush by wiping all the paint off that you can with paper towel or rag. Dip your brush into turpentine substitute to remove most paint. Wrap in paper towels and place in a protective plastic such as saran wrap or a plastic bag, and finish cleaning them when you get home.

**Completion of cleaning and storing brushes:** (at home, or if you are not going straight home, you can clean them in the hall bathroom as long as you clean the sink afterwards.) Ask your instructor for a demo of this process.

1. Wash brushes under warm running water with a gentle odorless dish soap, baby soap, or bar of Ivory soap, wipe, and repeat until no more pigment comes out. Rinse thoroughly.
2. (Optional) Lightly drag the brush over a cake of Ivory soap, evenly coating the outside layers of the brush with soap. With your fingers, gently form the bristles into the shape they were in when you purchased the brush. (This step is not used for fan brushes.)

3. Stand brush upright in a container to dry. This replaces the original sizing, and trains natural bristles back into place, and will give your brushes years of extra life. Then, brushes can be dipped in water or turpentine to remove your “sizing” before painting. Remove as much moisture from the brush as possible with a paper towel before painting with it.

**Saving abused or older brushes:** Natural fiber brushes (sable, hog bristle, badger) can sometimes be saved by cleaning the brush as well as possible (as noted above) and then slathering the brush in a cosmetic hair conditioner. Let the brush sit on plastic wrap, allowing the hair conditioner to soak in. (This could take an hour or a week, depending on the condition of the brush.) Wash the brush, cleaning as above. Repeat if necessary. Add Ivory soap “sizing.” If you are lucky, your brush will spring back to life! (This method does not work with synthetic brushes.)

**Before painting:** if desired, use an “invisible glove” by rubbing a nontoxic liquid cleaner such as Basic H onto hands, and let dry. After painting, wash hands and the paint just slides off! (Ask instructor if samples of Basic H are currently available in class.)

### **Used Rags And Paper Towels**

Used paper towels wiped with paint or turpentine substitute may remain in the trash basket for the duration of the class only. At the end of the class period, all trash baskets with paint or solvent waste must be emptied. Students may simply remove the trash bag, tie it up and toss it into the large dumpster at the south end (entrance) of the parking lot, or bring it home for disposal.

If you are in a class with a monitor, please remove and tie your trash bag, and she/he will collect these bags into a larger bag to take to the dumpster.

Used rags may be washed in the washing machine with a laundry liquid that is effective at removing oil (such as Shaklee Basic L.) HANG TO DRY. (Do not put these in the dryer because if any of the turpentine is still in the cloth it could be combustible.)

*\* NOTE: used paper towels or rags should NEVER be left in a car for long periods as the turpentine substitute may make them combustible.*

### **Removing paint from clothing**

It is recommended that students wear clothing to art class that they don't mind getting paint on. Smocks are a great idea for painters. To remove oil paint from clothing, wet the area with water and add a bit of a laundry liquid that is effective at removing oil (such as Shaklee Basic L, and/or Basic H.) Rub in with an old toothbrush. Let sit for at least 15 minutes (and up to a couple of days) and wash in the washing machine (with towels or old jeans, probably not you new Oscar del la Renta silk blouse!) Dry on moderate setting, remove promptly.