# 

# THE SECRET LANGUAGE OF ART

A Glossary of Art Terms

**ALKYD MEDIUM:** This is a synthetic resin that can be added to oil paint to help it dry faster. -

**ATLIER**: I just looked up the Miriam Webster definition and it says: a room where an artist works. My understanding is just a little different. An atelier is basically a student of art/painting and the process takes place in a Master Artist’s studio. The way I understand this word is it is the process in becoming a Master Artist.

**ANALOGOUS COLORS:** Colors that are close together on the color wheel, i.e., Red, Red Orange, Orange red, Orange.\*\*\* just an example

**ALLA PRIMA** (Italian: **at the first**) Also called **DIRECT PAINTING** Also called **WET ON WET**: These phrases describe a painting done in one sitting. Though there might be a quick underpainting, paintings done in this fashion are generally a single layer.

**BINDER:** An ingredient in paints (oil) that causes the pigment to stick to itself and the support.

**BISTRE:** Is an ink created from boiling the soot of wood. It’s lovely and transparent.

**BISTRE UNDERPAINTING:** When an artist is talking about a Bistre they are generally referring to an underpainting created in warm browns. This becomes a value map for ensuing layers.

**BRUSHWORK:** This is a description of the technique used by the artist to apply paint. We LOVE expressive brushwork! Or “painterly” brushwork

**CANVAS:** This is a support used to paint on. There is cotton canvas (much less expensive) and linen.

**CARTOON:** This is an outline of a piece of art. For instance, let’s say an artist does a preliminary drawing of his subject. He’s happy with his composition and decides that he would like to do a painting using this composition. He could create a **cartoon** by placing a piece of tracing paper under his work and follow the outline.

Another way (the way the Old Masters did it) to create a cartoon is to take a piece of heavier paper which is covered with charcoal, place the charcoal side down (on the canvas)then place the work of art that you would like to copy on top; then follow the outline to create a **cartoon**.

**CHIAROSCURO:** This Italian word means “light-dark”. When an artist uses this word they are talking about a very dramatic light and dark composition like Rembrandt would have created. The origins of this movement are credited to an artist named, Caravaggio. Many of the Dutch painters of the 1600s honed this technique to a fine art.

**COLD PRESSED LINSEED OIL:** This refers to the process by which the oil is extracted from the flaxseed. Because there is no heat used in this process the oil is purer.

**COPYRIGHT:** This means the creator of a particular work, paintings/art in this case; has the sole right to distribute, publish sell, or copy that creation. for the life of the creator/publisher plus 70 years.

**CHROMA:** This refers to how intense a color is. For instance how blue a blue is refers to it’s

# CHROMA

**DAMAR VARNISH** This is the varnish the old masters used to seal their paintings. It brings a uniformity to how the colors and values relate to one another.

There is controversy surrounding this product. Some say it yellows, others say it’s time tested. There are now other products available which are synthetic, but they do not have the 500 years

+ of use under their belt. Experiment, see what works for you.

**DRYING TIME:** This the amount of time it takes for an oil to “polymerize” or dry to a solid film.

**EDGES:** HARD, SOFT, LOST: A hard edge is well defined and separates one object or shape from another. Soft edges dissolve into the object next to them. Where a lost edge is undefinable from one object or shape, to another.

**FAT:** This is the amount and kind of oil used in a paint.

**FAT OVER LEAN:** This term refers to a specific approach to oil painting, which is using paint with less oil in the underpainting, with each successive layer having a bit more oil/fat. This helps ensure the stability and flexibility of the paint layer. When this approach isn’t followed it can result in the paint film cracking.

**FORSHORTENING:** Making a figure or object appear closer than features/things further away. creating perspective.

**GESSO:** There are two distinct types of GESSO: **1.** a traditional rabbit skin glue, water and calcium carbonate (chalk) **2**. Acrylic Gesso which, in reading, is acrylic paint with chalk. The reason for this step is to create a flexible surface for painting.

**Glazing:** Using thin layers of transparent paint to alter or enhance pervious layers. During the renaissance, because of the expense of pigment, glazes were used on top of a grisaille underpainting.

**GRISAILLE**: It is a painting done in varying values of “grey” by using black and white. I’ve heard of artist who add just a touch of burnt sienna to the black to keep the painting from being too cool.

**Hue:** This is the kind of color: blue/green blue/red, bluish

**IMPASTO:** The application of very thick paint where brush strokes can be very visible.

**MEDIUM: 1.** In oil painting it is a liquid used with oil paint to alter the flow of paint from the brush or palette knife. **2.** Referring to the type of material an artist uses to create, i.e.; oil paint, acrylic, charcoal, pastels, watercolor, graphite.

**MIX MEDIA:** When 2 or more “media” are used to create a piece of art; **For Instance;** oil paint

**and** acrylic

**MONOCHROMATIC:** Using a range of values with a single color to create a work of art.

**OPTICAL COLOR:** When two or more colors are placed next to each other the eyes of the viewer create yet another, completely different color.

**OILING OUT:** Using oil, or an oil medium, applied to a dry painting where the colors have become dull, or sunken in, to bring a more accurate relationship of colors and values.

**OIL PAINT:** A pigment that uses oil to bind the pigment together.

**PLEIN AIR PAINTING:** The act of painting out-of-doors.

**PERSPECTIVE:** Making an object look 3 dimensional on a two dimensional (flat) surface, using a spatial relationships to create the impression of distance and depth as the human eyes perceive.

**PRIMARY COLORS:** BLUE, RED, YELLOW. There are no other colors that can be mixed to create these 3 colors.

**SCUMBLING:** Using opaque paints to alter or enhance previous layers. It is a similar process as glazing, but because the paint is opaque, it is called scumbling.

**SECONDARY COLORS:** A color that is created by using two primary colors, i.e., blue and yellow makes green, or blue and red creates purple.

**SINKING IN:** When a dried color (generally a dark, often an earth tone) looks dull . A little retouch varnish (or oil) can liven the color back up so that it relates more accurately to the other colors and values of the painting. There is also the process of “oiling out” where oil is being used to bring back the luster.

**SHADOW:** When light hits an object, that object obstructs the flow of light and a dark area, or “**cast shadow**” is created. Then there is the “**Form Shadow**” which is created by the form turning away from the light.

Then in there is the “**reflected ligh**t” which is part of the “shadow” family. Reflected light happens when light from the environment bounces around the shadows; creating reflected light. How about the **core shadow**, which is a darker area found just beyond the terminator.

**TERMINATOR:** This is the line of shadow which no light passes. I have also heard this line referred to as the **BEDBUG** line. The reason said, “bedbugs will not cross a dark line into the light.

**UNDERPAINTING:** Using a monochromatic color to establish the composition of a painting. It is a tonal guide for ensuing layers.

**VANISHING POINT:** The point where two parallel lines converge at the horizon line.

**VERDACCIO** This is an underpainting technique done in a green/grey color. Leonardo Da Vinci used this underpinning technique for the Mona Lisa. Many other renaissance artists used this technique for a classical realism.