

Painting in Cold Weather

Is it ok to paint when it's cold outside? Below is a quick overview of the three mediums and how they are effected by cold temperatures.

Acrylics

While acrylics are best used at temperatures above 60°, could an artist paint outside when it's cold? The outdoor temperature should be above 49 or 50° F (9° C). Acrylics will not form a strong film and are prone to failure and other defects when subjected to cold temperatures. Golden Paints have tested their acrylics for uniformly coalescing and curing at various temperatures. They determined the MFFT (minimum film formation temperature) for Golden Acrylics is 49°.

Acrylic binder particles suspended in water lay down uniformly during the coalescing period. They create strong bonds during room temperature. When it's too cold out, the bonds are weaker. Cracks and poor adhesion are some effects produced. Many of their mediums have similar MFFTs; however, there are a few exceptions. Crackle Paste and GAC 200 need temperatures of 65 and 70° respectively to work properly.

Oils

Oil paints are best suited for painting in colder temperatures as they don't easily freeze. Linseed Oil freezes at -4° F (20° C). For a painter, this freezing point makes it easier for someone to paint outside.

Painters will notice oils and waxes become stiffer as temperatures dip. Some may enjoy working with stiffer paint. It allows the artist to push around the oils forming nice thick areas of paint. Once completed, it is best to cure paintings at room temperature. Curing Paint means the paint especially thick areas have fully hardened or are fully preserved. The artist can now apply varnish.

Watercolors

An artist can paint watercolors until 32° F when water will freeze. There are some instances where painters use gin or vodka instead of water to continue to paint in colder temperatures. One thing to consider is paint and paper will dry slower. Muddy colors are a risk. Also, crystalized washes may form when working outside. When you bring them inside, the area will warm up and the colors will potentially melt together.

Albright Art Supply

Reference Websites for Further Reading

<https://justpaint.org/painting-in-the-cold/>

<https://www.jacksonsart.com/blog/2014/01/03/painting-in-cold-weather/>

<https://www.wetcanvas.com/forums/topic/acrylics-in-cold-weather-widely-neglected-post-drying-period-changes/>

<https://www.artists-atelier.com/plein-air-wip-what-happens-to-oil-paint-in-extreme-cold-heat/>

<http://painterskeys.com/cold/>