

# Varnishing Techniques with Interactive



Interactive dries without a “plastic” look with very low sheen yet high color saturation. It is important to protect any painting with a finishing varnish and furthermore, you can choose to alter the final sheen of your Interactive painting.

Chroma offers two types of varnishes: water-based and solvent-based. The advantage of using water-based varnish is that it is non-toxic. However, it is non-removable. The advantage of using a solvent-based varnish is that it is removable with mineral spirits, but there are fumes involved, which some artists choose to avoid.

Both types of varnishes are applied with a brush, so use a soft brush reserved just for varnishing. The size of the brush should be appropriate to the piece. Do not overwork a varnish; just lay down one stroke at a time, slightly overlapping and do not work back into it. It usually takes 2 to 3 coats of a varnish to achieve an even sheen. You can work horizontally for the first coat; once dry, apply the second coat vertically, which will cover the holidays (the sections where the varnish did not catch). For some works, applying varnish in the direction of the painting's brush strokes will provide a more pleasing result. Practice varnishing on an old or failed piece of art whenever you try a new varnish or sheen. Varnishing is not difficult but with any new skill, practice makes perfect!



*Abstract 1, Jennifer VonStein*

## Matte, Satin and Gloss Medium & Varnish

Matte, Satin and Gloss Medium & Varnish are water-based, non-toxic and self-leveling. They can be used either as a medium to change the sheen levels of acrylic paints or as an over-varnish for acrylic painting, providing a non-tacky protective coating. Matte, Satin & Gloss Medium and Varnish are mid-viscosity products made from hard acrylic emulsion. They are non-removable, but they can be overpainted. They can also be followed with a solvent-based varnish.

The two most important things to remember about using a water-based varnish are:

1. Wait until your Interactive paint is cured. This is generally about two weeks from the last time you worked on it but the time will vary depending on how thickly you applied the paint, your surface, the humidity, and what mediums you used. For example, an impasto painting that used lots of Thick Slow Medium on panel will take longer to cure than one painted with thin layers on canvas.
2. Apply an isolation coat first. This step is often missed when varnishing acrylic paintings but is critical. Varnishes should be applied on a non-absorbent surface and an isolation coat seals your painting and protects it. The isolation coat also helps to prevent the cloudiness that can occur with matte varnishes. Apply 2 coats of Binder Medium or Fast Medium/Fixer to seal the surface of the painting before varnishing. Bear in mind though that the isolation coat, like a water-based varnish, is a permanent addition to your work.

## Matte Medium & Varnish

Matte Medium & Varnish will reduce the sheen and is a good varnish to apply if you are having trouble photographing a naturally glossy painting. After photographing, apply a gloss varnish (water-based or solvent-based).



## Satin Medium & Varnish

Satin Medium & Varnish restores the painting to Interactive's original satin finish. It is the most popular finish; not too dull, not too shiny.



## Gloss Medium & Varnish

Gloss Medium & Varnish will enhance darker colors and provides a more oil-like finish.



## Invisible, Satin and Gloss Solvent Finishing Varnishes

Chroma Solvent Finishing Varnishes are designed to protect finished acrylic and oil paintings. Because of their ease of use, we recommend using a solvent over water-based varnish for artists new to varnishing.

The Invisible, Satin and Gloss Solvent Finishing Varnishes are non-yellowing, self-leveling and protect against mold. They are strippable, which allow your painting to be cleaned more easily at a later date by swabbing with mineral spirits. Be sure to apply in a well-ventilated area.

Because these are solvent varnishes, you can apply them carefully to your Interactive painting before it has fully cured but your painting must be touch-dry. The isolation coat is still recommended because you can remove the top varnish at a later day and come back to the protected painting.

Clean your brush with mineral spirits when finished.



### Invisible Solvent Finishing Varnish

Invisible Solvent Finishing Varnish maintains the low sheen look and does not alter the surface quality of a painting. It can also be used on oil paintings as a “retouch” varnish while waiting out the advisable 3 to 6 month period for an oil painting to cure before applying a heavier protective varnish.



### Satin Solvent Finishing Varnish

Satin Solvent Finishing Varnish contains a matting agent and the container needs to be shaken before use to make sure it is evenly suspended. For full bottles, remove some varnish so you can shake the contents easily then return to the full bottle before using. Satin varnishes should never be diluted with turpentine because the ratio of matting agent to acrylic is critical.



### Gloss Solvent Finishing Varnish

Gloss Solvent Finishing Varnish can be used for a more oil-like paint look. Apply as is for a full gloss, usually one coat. To reduce gloss, add mineral turpentine to your taste. Try 2 parts varnish to 1 part turpentine, up to 1:1 for less sheen. **NOTE:** This varnish contains anti-mold additive that is diluted when you add turpentine so to maintain the mold protection for tropical conditions, dilute with Invisible Varnish instead.

## EXPLORATIONS

### Materials:

- Old or Failed Painting
- Brushes
- Atelier Gesso or Atelier Binder Medium
- Atelier Gloss Medium & Varnish
- Atelier Matte Medium & Varnish
- Atelier Satin Medium & Varnish
- Atelier Unlocking Formula
- Chroma Invisible Solvent Finishing Varnish
- Chroma Matte Solvent Finishing Varnish
- Chroma Gloss Solvent Finishing Varnish
- Atelier Fine Mist Water Sprayer

### Exploration 1: Creating a Water-based Varnish Sample Board

1. Find an old or failed painting. A painting with darker colors will show the results of the varnishes best. Apply 2 coats of Binder Medium or Fast Medium/Fixer as an isolation coat. Let dry.



2. Divide your painting into 4 sections. This piece will serve as your sample for your varnishes. Tape each section as you go so you will have clean lines and a solid comparison piece. In the second section, working from the center, apply an even coat of Matte Medium & Varnish horizontally using a soft brush. Do not overwork! Once dry, apply a second coat vertically.



- Once the Matte Medium & Varnish has dried, tape off your third section. Working from the center, apply an even coat of Satin Medium & Varnish horizontally using a soft brush. Do not overwork! Once dry, apply a second coat vertically.



- Once the Satin Medium & Varnish has dried, tape off the last section. In a separate container, mix equal parts of Gloss Medium & Varnish with water and stir well. The Gloss Medium & Varnish is very concentrated so it needs to be mixed evenly with water. Working from the center, apply an even coat of Gloss Medium & Varnish horizontally using a soft brush. Do not overwork! Once dry, apply a second coat vertically.



- When the Gloss Medium & Varnish has dried, remove the tape and compare the sheens. Observe the difference between the original, unvarnished section and the sheens associated with the Matte, Satin & Gloss Medium and Varnishes.



*Binder  
Medium*

*Matte  
Medium  
& Varnish*

*Satin  
Medium  
& Varnish*

*Gloss (detail)  
Medium  
& Varnish*

**If you apply a water-based varnish and decide at a later date that you want to add to the piece, you can overpaint with Interactive.**

## Exploration 1: Creating a Solvent Varnish Sample Board

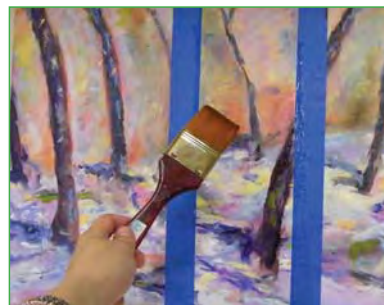
- Find an old or failed painting. A painting with darker colors will show the results of the varnishes best. Apply a layer of Binder Medium or Fast Medium/Fixer as an isolation coat. Let dry.



- Divide your painting into 4 sections. This piece will serve as your sample for your varnishes. Tape each section as you go so you will have clean lines and a solid comparison piece. Work in a well-ventilated area. In the section beginning at the center, apply an even coat of Invisible Solvent Finishing Varnish horizontally using a soft brush. Do not overwork! Once dry, apply a second coat vertically.

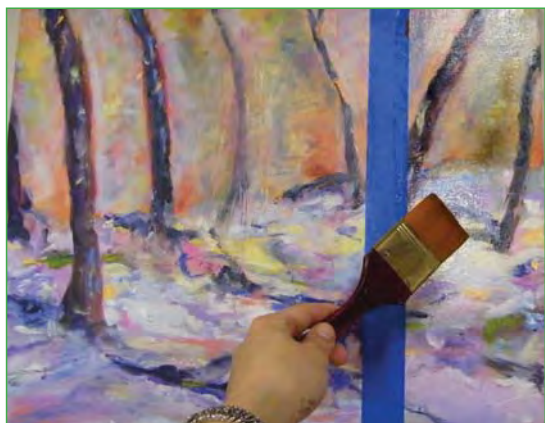


- Once the Invisible Solvent Finishing Varnish has dried, tape off your third section. Stir/shake your bottle of Satin Solvent Finishing well. Beginning at the center, apply an even coat of Satin Solvent Finishing Varnish horizontally using a soft brush. Do not overwork! Once dry, apply a second coat vertically.



Chroma, Inc  
205 Bucky Drive, Lititz, PA 17543  
1-800-257-8278 • www.chromaonline.com

- Once the Satin Solvent Finishing Varnish has dried, tape off the last section. Beginning at the center, apply an even coat of Gloss Solvent Finishing Varnish horizontally using a soft brush. Do not overwork! Once dry, apply a second coat vertically.



- When the Gloss Solvent Finishing Varnish has dried, remove the tape and compare the sheens. Observe the difference between the original, unvarnished section and the sheens associated with the Invisible, Satin and Gloss Solvent Finishing Varnishes.



*Binder  
Medium*

*Invisible  
Solvent  
Finishing  
Varnish*

*Satin  
Solvent  
Finishing  
Varnish*

*Gloss (detail)  
Solvent  
Finishing  
Varnish*

**For some paintings, varnishing in the direction of the major masses works well instead of horizontal or vertical applications. Look at your painting and determine what would look best before starting.**



Chroma, Inc  
205 Bucky Drive, Lititz, PA 17543  
1-800-257-8278 • [www.chromaonline.com](http://www.chromaonline.com)