

January Instructions
Willem van Aelst Study
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For the Video Link, Please see Page 3

Historical Information

To start the painting we first need to establish the “Ground”. The ground is the surface that the artist uses. The artist of old would usually prepare a surface with these steps
Ground- base to paint on.

Ground Color- color for the base.

Imprimatura- First washes of transparent color.

Paint layers- Decorative layers of paint.

The preparation technique you use for the ground and surface type controls the absorption of the paint layer and affect all the layers of paint placed on top of it. A proper ground is fundamental to the success of the painting. For example if you placed paint on a piece of glass the paint would stay on top. This hard surface also allows for greater transparencies because the paint can not be absorbed. This also presents a problem for making the paint stick to the glass. If you put the same color on a piece of unsealed wood, the paint would soak in that become more opaque. Grounds were created to control the various desired painting techniques and paint absorption. The desire was to create a surface that would allow a small portion of paint to be absorbed but not so much as to make the paint opaque.

Each artist had their favorite grounds and preparation techniques. Most would use a chalk base which hardened the surface but still allowed some paint to absorb which not only assisted in the layer process, it also guaranteed the longevity of the painting. If some of the paint is allow to absorb slightly into the ground, the paint has a better chance to “stick” or adhere to the surface. Many grounds used in the old masters pieces have failed over the years. This was primarily due to their grounds not staying “flexible”. If the ground you choose to use does not stay flexible, it will eventually crack and crack the paint layers place on top of it.

When preparing a surface for layers of paint an artist must consider;

1. How many layers of paint and the transparency of the layers. A proper ground will be hard enough to only allow a small portion of the paint to absorb while forcing to rest to stay “proud” or on top of the ground facilitating transparency.
2. Harmonizing color for the painting. The ground color is vital to the effect of the painting. The color unifies the entire painting and allows contrast to be developed. The color should be light and bright and glazed into position.
3. Smoothness for the technique. Each artist prepared the ground in such a way that would allow the painting of fine detail. Small paintings were normally completed on very hard surface such as metal because the ground was so smooth that extremely fine detail work could be done with little distortion from the ground.
4. Flexibility. The ground must stay flexible so that the top layers of paint will not crack over time.

Traditions Ground Techniques

In the Traditions line of paint we have several products that can be used as a ground.

1. **Matte Paint.** This is paint without anything added to it. Matte paint makes fantastic grounds for dry brush techniques. This is a soft absorptive ground which is not suited for transparent layering which we will be doing.
2. **Glazing Medium.** This is a semi-hard ground and allows some material to absorb into the surface. This can be mixed with matt paint to vary the degree of absorption.
3. **Multi-Surface Sealer.** This is a hard ground. Very good for layering transparent colors. The Multi-Surface Sealer is designed to keep the surface very hard but also “glue” the layers to it. The sealer stays very flexible and is a very good choice for Dutch layering techniques.
4. **Primers.** Both light and dark contain sealer and are tinted with color. These are excellent for making flexible hard ground surfaces. The primers can be controlled with the addition of matte paint or other Traditions Products.
5. **Texture Medium.** This is a semi-hard surface. The Texture Medium is formulated to stay flexible while also smoothing the surface. It is an excellent ground for canvas especially when added to the primers in a 1 to 1 ratio. There is no need to use this product on a smooth surface.

Willem van Aelst Preparation

To watch the Video Lesson on these steps, please click this link;

[Willem van Aelst Preparation](#)

To watch the video, make sure your computer is connected to the internet before clicking the link.

For this study we need a smooth, semi-hard surface. This can be created in many ways. Sealers + Paint, Sealers + other Semi- hard mediums or paint.

Step 1- Preparing the Ground

Please prepare you surface with these instructions

Hardboard, Masonite, Ampersand etc.

We do not need to smooth this type of surface.

1. Mix Light Primer + Titanium White equal parts.
2. Coat the surface evenly using a slip slap or X motion to the brush. Allow to dry. You may dry with a hairdryer on low, not hot. The primers have a slow drying time which gives them better adhesion. If you dry them too fast however, you can surface dry the primer which will crack it.
3. Sand the surface with 180 to 220 grit sandpaper to remove brush marks.
4. Give surface another of the mix and allow to dry. Sand if needed.

Canvas or Canvas Board

This surface we must smooth prior to painting.

1. Mix Light Primer + Texture Medium, equal parts.
2. Scrap over the surface with a palette knife, putty knife, stiff cardboard or thin piece of wood. Scrap one direction then the other, avoiding ridges of texture. This coat should be light and thin on the surface.
3. Allow to dry or dry with a hair dryer on low.
4. When dry sand lightly with 180 or 220 grit sandpaper to remove any excess texture.
5. Using the mix from step 1, add a little Titanium White. Scrap this over the surface to smooth in the same manner as the first coat. Dry.
6. Repeat steps if needed until the surface is smooth.

Step 2 Ground Color

With this step we need to give the ground a color. For this painting the ground color must be a bright orange. This orange can be Traditions Vermilion or Traditions Perinone Orange.

1. Mix your ground color with Multi-Surface Sealer or Glazing Medium, equal amounts. Add a little water. If you are afraid you will not be able to work very fast, add a little Extender Medium. This will increase the drying time.
2. Mist the surface with water using a spray bottle.
3. Take a large wet paper towel and dress it in the orange color.

4. Wipe this color over the surface quickly. It will dry fast because we are only using water. This does not need to be smooth. Leave some variations for interest. Tap the paper towel on the surface to create additional interest.
5. If you need more working time you can mist with more water or even add a little Extender to the paint.
6. Allow to dry or use a hair dryer.
7. Repeat the color. This will remove additional white areas. Let some variations happen in the lights however. Tap the paper towel on the surface to create additional interest.
8. Dry well.



Step 3- Imprimatura Layers.
See Photo Left- Photo of board after step 3

Mix Burnt Umber + equal amount Multi-Surface Sealer or Glazing Medium. Mist surface with water. Use a damp paper towel. I use several. Dip the paper towel into the Burnt Umber mix and wipe over the surface. Use various directions. Before leaving the surface, tap the paper towel on the surface to create some variations. Wash mixture transparently over surface with paper towel. Look for value 6. Dry well. Protect with a coat of Glazing Medium or Multi-Surface Sealer if desired.

Step 4

Mark lines for the table. 5 1/4, 3 1/4 and 1 5/8 inches. I used a chalk pencil. This will give about 1/4 inch from the bottom of the panel to place the pattern. If you plan on framing this design, you should leave at least 1/4 inch extra. Protect table front edge with scotch tape. Mix Brunt Umber + Raw Umber about 1 to 1, then add an equal amount Multi-Surface Sealer or Glazing Medium. Mist board surface with water. Wash mixture transparently over surface with paper towel feathering off as you go onto the back edge of the table. You could add Extender Medium to any of these washes if you want increased working time.

Step 5

Tape off back edge of table. Mix Burnt Umber + Raw Umber + Carbon Black. Add an equal amount of Glazing Medium or Multi-Surface Sealer. Wipe an even coat of

Extender Medium over the surface if desired and shadow the back edge of the wall next to the table. Shadow casually through the center of the painting where the flowers will be. Wash lightly over the front edge of the table and below the front edge of the table.



Step 6

See Photo Left. Photo of canvas board ready for pattern.

Pull tape and wash Medium Beige very transparent over the top of the table to "cloud" the surface. This will make the marble easier later on. This can be done while the last step is still wet. Add a touch of Burnt Umber to the Medium Beige and "cloud" the front edge of the table a little darker than the top.

Step 7

Dry well, transfer minimum pattern lines. See you next month!