

GESSO

A WOOD PANEL

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What is gesso?

Gesso is a mixture that is used to coat surfaces such as:

- wood panels
- canvases
- Masonite
- paper

and acts as a primer for painting. It has been used for more than five centuries.

What is it made of?

True gesso is made of:

- chalk and or maybe gypsum
- a binder (e.g. glue or other acrylate polymer)
- a pigment (for colour)

Why use it?

Gesso does the following:

- thick gesso can be used to build texture, even sculpt
- it helps paint stick to a surface
- it reduces paint from seeping through the substrate
- it prolongs the life of the artwork

BINARY ARTIST

Ready to gesso a wood panel?

The following provides very basic information. Much will depend on what your end goals are for your artwork – practice (use student grade) or professional grade for exhibitions or sales. Smooth preparation is best for realism, rougher for impressionism or impasto work. Finally, decide what paint you will use – oils or acrylic or mixed media, for example.

Materials

- Gesso (white/black/colour)
- I also use GAC100 (for the back prep)
- Wood panels
- Water

Equipment

- Sander – I have a Ryobi 300W random orbital
- Bench
- Floor covers or similar – to prevent splatter
- Cloth for cleaning
- Something for your boards to sit on – I use containers so they don't stick to anything (I'm still quite messy).
- Things for stirring
- More containers (if you want to add water to your gesso)
- Sandpaper (at least two grits)
- Select your brush/roller (consider bristles, foam or material applicators)

Do the work

- Sand your wood panel lightly and wipe clean
- Add a layer of gesso using a brush (or other) for either a smooth or textured surface
- Dry for at least 24 hours
- Sand, wipe and repeat