



# Tips from the Studio

## ACRYLICS!

Keeping them workable for longer

**Which of the following statements is true?**

*One of the beauties of acrylics is that they dry quickly so you can work fast!*

*One of the downsides of acrylics is that they dry fast so they are hard to work with.*

**BOTH!**

There are many different ways that you can extend the drying time of acrylics and as I tend to work equally in acrylics and oils I like to be able to use the benefits of both, so I use a Stay Wet palette for my acrylics, and I use Alkyd Oil to speed up the drying time.

If you are new to acrylics it is worth bearing these few tips in mind before starting your painting.

### STAY WET PALETTE

If you are like me your painting flow will be interrupted by children, dogs, deliveries etc. then a Stay Wet Palette is a must!

You can buy a Stay Wet Palette from most art shops but it is just as easy to make your own out of things that are lying around.

The key elements of a Stay Wet palette are:-

TRAY – an old meat or vegetable tray from the supermarket

WET CLOTH OR KITCHEN TOWEL

WAX PAPER OR BAKING PARCHMENT

Simply ensure that your tray is big enough to hold all your colours, and wash it thoroughly.

Dampen some kitchen roll or a J Cloth and place it on top of the tray

Then add a sheet of baking parchment or waxed paper on top.

The Baking parchment may curl but you can always fold the edges under and this will be minimal.

I then either use the lid that came with the meat tray (if it did) or cover with cling film or tin foil to keep the air out.

It is the air that will dry the paint out so if your palette isn't airtight then a film may form on top of the paint.

### SPRAY WITH WATER

You can also use a spray bottle (cheap and available at most bargain stores or garden centres) and spritz your palette every now and then if your paint starts to dry. Beware though as if your paint has already started to dry out, this may cause it to break up into pieces that could contaminate any new paint that you add to the palette which could in turn make their way into your painting! I recommend wiping any used dried up residue on your palette with some kitchen towel before adding more paint.

### RETARDER

There are so many mediums that you can use to great effect with acrylics, but the one that will extend the working time of your paint is Retarder.

You can either mix your colours and add a few drops to each colour or add a few drops to the base colours BEFORE you mix them. I do both depending on my mood and it will give you maybe an hour or so extra time before the paint dries, depending on the atmosphere.

### TOP TIP!

If you are painting plein air I recommend the stay wet palette and spray your palette if necessary, as you may want the paint to dry quickly on the canvas to be able to capture the scene and retarder may make the paint workable on the canvas for longer than required.

Different brands and types of acrylics will dry differently too.

I tend to use [Golden Heavy Bodied Acrylic](#) as the texture and body of the paint suits my style. I also use Acrylic Ink in some pieces and these obviously have more flow. No need for a [Stay Wet Palette](#) for these as they can be used straight from the bottle. Make sure you keep them somewhere cool though, as with all inks, they can dry up over time.

There are other types of Acrylics which I will go into in another Top Tip Post, but if you have any different ways of working or some top tips you would like to share feel free to comment on this post.

I hope you have enjoyed this free download. Please sign up to my newsletter to receive top tips into your inbox without you having to lift a finger 😊

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