

Bellofy

Clean Up Time

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This is always the worst part in an artist's life. The need to clean up the palettes, brushes, easels, and other odds and ends in the studio. It is actually rather easy if you know what you are doing.

The brushes are the first thing to address. This is where the coffee cans come into play. Filling them half full of turpentine or another paint solvent will allow the brushes to soak until you are done with everything else. Just drop them in, bristle first, right into the turpentine.

If you are working with oils, you will want a fine cloth to cover your canvas. Do not use a cloth which has a lot of lint or loose fibers. A thin cotton sheeting is perfect. Be careful not to let the fabric touch the art piece. You can actually buy extender clamps to attach to your canvas at the top. This allows the covering to drape without coming in contact with the painting.

The next thing you need to determine is if you are going to be using the same palette colors again, anytime soon. If you are, then just slip the entire thing into a plastic bag and twist the end shut. This keeps foreign matter from getting into your paints while you are away.

If you have decided you are done with that particular color palette, scrape it off with a putty knife. I will say this about palettes. Stored properly, the ones you have used for your oil paintings will last for several days or even a week or so. You may not wish to waste the paints. If you are scraping the palette, rinse it off with some linseed oil or mineral spirits when you are done. Rub clean with a clean rag.

After you have put away all your supplies you can go back to the brushes. Certain brushes can carry a large paint load. You may not believe it until you are trying to clean them. Clean one brush at a time. Work the turpentine or another solvent into the bristles of the brush. Rinse with fresh solvent and completely dry with a clean rag. Either lay the brush flat or stand it up in a container with the bristles towards the ceiling. You do not ever want to leave the brush in solvent overnight. This can break down the brush and it will not perform as you have come to expect. Keeping the brushes clean and the bristles straight will allow them to continue making the brush strokes you want.

Acrylic paints can be cleaned up in the same way. However, the difference is the palette will not last. It must be cleaned after each use. The paints will dry within hours. There is one little tip that some artists use. By sticking the palette in a plastic bag and putting it in the freezer, the paints can stay soft. Sometimes this works and sometimes it does not. The quality of the paints has quite a bit to do with this.

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