

So You Want to Glaze?

What is a Glaze? A glaze is a thin, transparent layer of paint and glazing is simply building up color by applying thin, transparent layers one on top of another, dry layer. Each glaze tints or changes those beneath it. So why is glazing something that can trouble, and even unhinge, artists so much? Well, while the theory may be simple, putting it into practice takes patience and persistence to master.

If you're a painter who needs instant results, glazing is probably not for you. But if you're a painter wanting to take your paintings up a level, glazing will give you colors with a luminosity, richness, and depth you cannot get by mixing colors on a palette. Why is this? In very basic terms, it's because light travels through all the transparent layers (glazes), bounces off the canvas, and reflects back at you. Your eyes mix the layers of color to 'see' the final color, giving a luminosity you don't get with a physically mixed color.

Painting Glazes Tip No. 1: Get to Know Your Colors

Take the time to learn which pigments are transparent, semi-transparent, or opaque. Some manufacturers state this on their paint tubes but you can also test for yourself. If you are working with Genesis, all colors can be made transparent without degradation using Thinning Medium, Glazing Gel or Mona Lisa Paint Thinner.

Painting Glazes Tip No. 2: Be Extremely Patient

If you apply a glaze onto traditional oil paint that isn't totally dry, the layers of paint will mix together, which is just what you *don't* want to happen. You are looking for quite the opposite. If you are working with the Genesis paint, you can dry your painting and start glazing immediately.

Painting Glazes Tip No. 3: Glazes Like Smooth Surfaces

A glaze is a thin layer of paint which should lie smoothly on top of the previous layers. A smooth Masonite hard-board panel or portrait-grade canvas is ideal to start with. Add a layer of Final Coat varnish prior to glazing with oils or Genesis. This will allow the glaze to glide.

Painting Glazes Tip No. 4: Use a Light Ground/Surface

Use a light-colored or white ground, which helps reflect light, rather than a dark one, which helps absorb light. If you're not convinced, do a test by painting exactly the same glazes on a white ground and a black or dark brown one. This is why I start my paintings on either a light gray or the white of the canvas. It truly does increase the luminosity. Think about in the summer how light repels the light while a dark surface is absorbing the light and heat.



Painting Glazes Tip No. 5: Glazing Mediums

Glazing mediums thin the paint you're using to the right constituency for glazing. They also solve any possible adhesion problems arising from diluting the paint too much. Experiment with the ratio of medium to paint to get a feel for how much to add; too much and you sometimes get a glassy, excessively glossy effect. With the Genesis paint, be sure to respect a 40/60 ratio of Thinning Medium to Paint as the Thinning Medium does not have any drying ingredients. The Glazing Gel may be used in any proportion. Mona Lisa Paint Thinner is another option for oils or Genesis.

Painting Glazes Tip No. 6: Use a Soft Brush

Glazes need to be painted smoothly, without visible brush marks. Use a soft clean brush with rounded edges, such as a filbert brush. Smoothing over the top of the paint with a mop brush is a useful way to eliminate visible brush strokes.

Painting Glazes Tip No. 7: Unify a Painting With a Final Glaze

When the painting is finished, apply one final glaze over the whole painting. This helps unify all the parts of the painting. An alternative is to apply a final unifying glaze to just the elements in the focal point. This is also called veiling. It really pulls a piece together!