

## **Airbrush**

### **Airbrushing Artist Acrylic Colors on Canvas**

**Why do many artists who incorporate airbrush technique in their works prefer artist acrylic colors when working on canvas? There are several reasons. For one, unlike oil paint, acrylic paint dries very quickly. This allows the artist to easily work with stencils, masks and shields when developing images. Acrylics are also easy to clean from the airbrush with the use of only soap and water. In addition, they're also lower in toxicity and waterproof when dry. And, like oil paints, they are colorfast.**

**Why do artists who airbrush acrylics work on canvas? Because it allows them to work much larger than any sheet of paper does. Canvas is very durable and will last for years; it's easy to transport and store (lightweight and can be rolled); and it is the traditional ground for easel painting.**

**Following are some tips for the artist using airbrush with acrylics on canvas:**

**--Acrylics from all manufacturers can be sprayed through an airbrush. But first the paint must be reduced or thinned to a fluidity that can be sprayed, e.g., ink. Acrylics are available in a variety of manufactured consistencies, from thick to fluid. Some acrylics are pre-reduced for airbrush technique, but most are not. When thinning acrylic colors, use a thinning agent comprised of 50% water and 50% gloss medium. Mix these together well in a jar and then add a few droplets of a water tension-releasing agent. Then use this mixture to thin the paints to the desired consistency.**

**--To achieve a discernible edge in airbrush technique, artists use a wide array of self-adhering and handheld stencils, tapes, friskets, templates, masks and shields. In some cases the gessoed canvas surface must be very smooth for proper adhesion. This is achieved by sanding the surface with very fine sandpaper to develop an eggshell-smooth finish.**

**--An innate characteristic of artist acrylic colors is the tendency to clog the airbrush tip, which happens because the paint dries so quickly. If you see bubbles appear in the color cup or paint jar, this is a good indication that the tip is beginning to clog and must be cleaned. You can quickly flick the dried paint off with a fingernail and continue working or, if necessary, use a small stiff paintbrush to clean the tip with airbrush or window cleaner.**

**--When working on a gessoed surface, remember that it is not as absorbent as paper. You must be careful when developing an opaque color to not spray paint on too quickly. Do this by spraying several light overlapping passes and allowing each to dry before application of the next. Otherwise you may blow wet paint where you don't want it.**

**--When an acrylic painting on canvas is completed, protect it with a coating of picture varnish. Either a mat or gloss acrylic varnish or a removable oil-based varnish can be used.**

**In many cases an acrylic painting is done with a combination of techniques that incorporates anything from screen printing to sponging. All techniques, including airbrushing, work well together when done in artist acrylic colors.**