

An abstract oil painting with thick, textured brushstrokes. The color palette is dominated by deep blues, greens, and yellows, with some warmer tones like reds and oranges interspersed. The overall effect is one of depth and movement, typical of wet-in-wet oil painting techniques.

Oil Painting

Mastering Wet-in-Wet Oil Painting: 7
Essential Tips for Layering and Depth

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Introduction:

Embarking on the journey of wet-in-wet oil painting can be both exhilarating and challenging. One common struggle artists face is effectively layering paint on top of an existing wet layer without losing control or creating undesirable textures. In this comprehensive guide, we'll explore seven essential tips to help you navigate and master the art of wet-in-wet layering, ensuring your paintings achieve the desired richness and vibrancy.

1. Start with a Thin Blocking In Layer:

Creating a solid foundation is crucial when working with wet-in-wet techniques. Begin by applying a thin blocking-in layer of paint. This initial layer serves as a base that is neither too slippery nor too thick, allowing subsequent layers to adhere more effectively. This approach, known as "painting fat over lean," sets the stage for a smoother layering process. If you require a little more stability to the painting surface and time is not an issue you can leave the thin layer to settle overnight. This will provide a bit more "tooth" to the painting surface for your next layer.

2. Utilize Bristle Brushes for Thick Layers:

Selecting the right brush is key to successfully layering thick paint on top of a wet surface. Opt for bristle brushes, which have stiffer bristles capable of holding and applying a significant amount of paint. Unlike thin bristle brushes, which may slide over wet layers, stiffer brushes provide the necessary control to build up impasto layers effectively. I suggest a set of long flat bristle brushes in sizes 4,6 and 8. My preference is [Raphael brushes, Paris Classic range](#), but any similar quality bristle brush will work fine.

3. Apply Decisive Strokes:

To prevent the blending of colors into a muddy mix, employ decisive strokes when applying the second layer. Treat each stroke as if you're placing individual tiles of color next to each other. Avoid going over the paint repeatedly, as this can lead to unwanted blending and compromise the integrity of your layered composition.

4. Avoid Excessive Use of Mediums:

While mediums can alter the consistency of paint, it's essential to exercise caution when incorporating them into your wet-in-wet process. Too much medium can make the paint excessively wet and slippery, hindering your control over the brush. Conversely, a lack of medium may result in paint that is too dry and difficult to work with. Aim for a soft and buttery consistency for optimal layering. Here is more detailed [information on mediums](#) and how I prefer to use them.

5. Experiment with Acrylic Underpainting:

For artists looking to expedite the drying process and enhance confidence in layering, consider starting with an acrylic underpainting. The quick-drying nature of acrylics allows you to establish a base layer that sets the stage for the application of thicker oils. Over time, as you gain proficiency, you may choose to skip the acrylic underpainting step altogether. If you want to explore this technique in depth I have a course called [Paint with Oils Over Acrylics](#).

6. Clean Your Brush Between Strokes:

To maintain the purity of your new layer, regularly clean your brush if you notice it picking up colors from the canvas. This simple yet crucial step involves wiping off the brush with a tissue after every few strokes. By preventing unintended color transfer, you ensure that each layer remains distinct and contributes to the overall richness of your composition.

7. Embrace the Learning Process:

Finally, embrace the learning curve associated with wet-in-wet layering. Mistakes are inevitable, but they offer valuable lessons for improvement. As you persevere and create more paintings, you'll develop a deeper understanding of the technique, refining your skills and achieving a unique, glowing quality in your work. You can explore Impressionist styles of painting in my course [How to Paint Like an Impressionist](#).

Conclusion:

Mastering the art of wet-in-wet layering in oil painting requires patience, practice, and a willingness to learn from each artistic endeavor. By following these seven essential tips, you'll enhance your ability to layer paint effectively, resulting in paintings that boast richness, vibrancy, and a distinctive, impressionistic quality. So, grab your brushes, experiment with these techniques, and watch your wet-in-wet paintings come to life with depth and allure.

Further Study with these Special Offers .

Painting with thicker paint is one of the joys of oil painting. The rich, buttery paint with its glowing, gem-like character is a delight.

This approach is often found in Impressionist paintings. If you go deeper into the subject you will be learning about impasto techniques as well.

For this reason I created two courses to focus on these topics: 1) How to Paint Like an Impressionist and (2) Impasto Mastery. Both of these courses work well together and complement each other. I have therefore included special offers here in case you want to snap up these courses for further learning. Simply click on the course names below and preview the curriculums. (1)

[How to Paint Like an Impressionist](#) (2) [Impasto Mastery](#)

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