Techniques for Cleaning Acrylic Paintings

As with any surface around the home, office, or especially, in a public place, paintings become a repository for airborne dust. They can also get touched occasionally, either inadvertently or purposefully, and may become soiled from the contact. Acrylic paintings have unique attributes that affect their propensity for attracting and retaining dirt and grime. One theory is that they are prone to carrying a static charge, which results in greater dust attraction and retention. Regardless of whether this characteristic substantially affects dust attraction, based on our observations of acrylic paint and conversations with conservators, we know that the thermoplastic nature of the paint film can result in significant adhesion of particles to the surface.

"Thermoplastic" means that the relative hardness and flexibility of the polymer are influenced by changes in temperature. As temperatures increase, acrylic becomes softer, more flexible and may become tacky. As this happens, any debris present can become adhered to the surface and will subsequently require relatively aggressive methods for removal. While the manufacturer of acrylic paint can choose harder polymers that are less prone to this problem, there are trade-offs associated with their use. The principal virtues of acrylic paints are their inherent film flexibility and

Sam Golden, Paintmaking Pioneer and Founder of Golden Artist Colors Passes Away at 82.

When Sam died unexpectedly, on March 11, this year, at the age of 82, the art world lost an extraordinary friend. Sam described his work as simply "making tools" for artists, but those who knew him understood a great deal more went on within this inventor, entrepreneur and paint maker. He had an incredible creative spirit and took tremendous pride in trying to meet the paint material needs of his professional customers. For Sam, making paint was much more than a mere act of commerce, or a way of making a living.

Whether working side by side with artists in his lab, or listening to their stories of trying to produce that special piece, Sam was thrilled to be allowed into that creative process of the artist.

"Don't tell me it can't be done, just let me be ignorant and let me believe that it can."
-Sam Golden

Continued page 3...
TECHNIQUES FOR CLEANING ACRYLIC PAINTINGS

Right: Small section of highly textured acrylic painting hung in a high traffic area. Note the heavy deposit of dust on the horizontal surface.

1 - Painting after blowing off surface with compressed air. Surface still dirty.

2 - Light brushing of the surface with a soft hair brush under vacuum.

3 - Gently applying tape and removing to help rid embedded dirt on surface.

4 - Applying moistened cotton swab for removing dirt on surface.
Techniques for Cleaning Acrylic Paintings

lack of brittleness. Using harder acrylic polymers would result in a painting being more susceptible to cracking from impact or movement during shipping as the result of raising the glass transition temperature (GTT), the point at which the film will snap like glass instead of bending as plastic is expected to. A higher GTT increases the risk of permanent damage to a painting from mishandling. GOLDEN Acrylics are formulated to optimize flexibility of the paint film and to maintain a reasonably low GTT. However, this does mean that unprotected paintings are at greater risk of requiring more aggressive cleaning practices.

Characteristics of a painting's construction also affect its tendency to retain foreign material and its subsequent ease of cleaning. These should be considered when choosing materials to execute a work and when deciding on display locations and conditions. For example, use of acrylic paint allows the artist to build incredible impasto surfaces that dry quickly, without deforming. The resulting terrain of this type of surface contains numerous horizontal planes which act as shelves for dust to land on and become embedded into over time. The surface may also contain concave areas and hollows in which debris can collect. Compounding this characteristic is that these areas can be extremely difficult to clean.

On a more microscopic level, the acrylic paint film is relatively porous, caused by tiny voids left as the water evaporates during the drying process and protrusion of solids near the surface of the film as it shrinks during drying. The subtle texture that results provides a surface that is both easier to soil and more difficult to clean, similar to the difference that might be noticed in gloss vs. satin interior house paints. This characteristic is accentuated with certain specialty products. For example, GOLDEN Pastel Ground is designed to abrade and retain soft materials that contact it, while GOLDEN Absorptive Ground is especially effective at drawing stains into the surface. Therefore, left unprotected, both are at higher risk of becoming soiled and would be more difficult to clean than regular GOLDEN Acrylic Gesso.

Another characteristic of acrylic paint that provides both a benefit and reason for caution is its ability to function as an adhesive, particularly during the final stages of drying. This property is effectively used by collage artists wanting an archival means of assembling a work because the acrylic does not become brittle with age, remain water soluble or discolor like many traditional glues. However, this property may result in paintings becoming permanently marred if foreign material is allowed to touch the surface during the final stages of drying, as might happen if dust from sanding is in the air of a studio.

The ability of the binder to function as a stand alone medium for painting, as with GOLDEN Gels and Mediums, adds another dimension to the visual effect possible with acrylic. If the intent is to look through a layer of relatively clear media, a dirty surface is quite distracting. Too often, a clear acrylic dispersion media (i.e., GOLDEN Polymer Medium) is selected as a final topcoat in lieu of a removable varnish. Used as such, there is the risk that once dirty, there is no assurance that it can be effectively cleaned, especially without affecting light transmittance of the film due to potential physical abrasion from the cleaning process.

Overuse of additives to achieve performance variations in acrylic paints, such as GOLDEN Retarder to slow drying or Flow Release to enhance staining, can also affect dirt retention properties of the paint film. Retarder does increase the open time, but will also lengthen that period when the paint is no longer workable, yet is still not fully dry. During this time, the paint film is far more susceptible to retaining airborne contaminants that contact it. Similarly, Acrylic Flow Release used in excess can result in a paint film that remains extremely tacky for a long period of time.

Knowing why acrylic paintings may eventually require cleaning is helpful because this knowledge can be used to make choices that will aid in avoiding or postponing the cleaning process, which is the first level in the hierarchy of conservation practice, i.e., prevent the need for intervention.

Why Minimize the Need for Cleaning

Every time a painting is touched, it is at risk of being changed or damaged on some level. In taking the long view that art materials should be manufactured to be as archival or long lasting as possible, the advice offered herein for cleaning practices follows a similar theme. The fewer times a
Techniques for Keeping Acrylic Paintings Clean

painting is cleaned, the less chance there is for permanent damage to occur. Sometimes these effects are almost microscopic, such as minute scratches that may occur if dust or an abrasive cloth is wiped across the surface or the concern that use of mild cleaning agents will remove small amounts of soluble components of the paint. At the other extreme is the possibility of permanent visual changes that could result from the wrong choice of cleaning method by an untrained individual, such as a "tide line" appearing on a stain-painted canvas because a wet cleaning method was used, or burning of a matte surface resulting from trying to wipe away dirt. Worse yet, for example, would be if a fragile paint film is aggressively cleaned and large, visible portions of paint are accidentally removed from the support.

Regardless of the amount of change, in the context of thinking that art should be capable of lasting forever, any change or potential for change to the piece through cleaning conflicts with this end. For this reason, cleaning of paintings by professionals in fine art conservation is the best approach to maximize longevity. They employ a tiered approach to cleaning that starts with the least intervention possible and progressively becomes more aggressive as needed. However, there are upper bounds of intervention dictated by the risk of the cleaning activity permanently affecting the painting, balanced against the anticipated incremental gain provided.

A General Approach to Cleaning Acrylic Paintings

In our conversations with people in the field of art conservation, we often ask "How do you clean acrylic paintings?" Although the most common answer is "with great difficulty," we're looking for something more concrete. From these conversations and the general lack of material on the subject in conservation publications and symposia, it is our impression that there remains room for further research in this area. However, there are commonalities in the approach to cleaning paintings that are worth describing. The following series of steps is a compilation of approaches of several conservators with whom we talked. Because of the lack of definitive research in this area, some of the ideas presented here should be considered experimental and may be debatable.

1. At the first evaluation and at each subsequent step, the question must be asked, "Is the anticipated intervention necessary?" Current ethics in conservation prescribe a minimalist approach to the treatment of paintings. This is due to the recognition of irreversible changes that have occurred to works of art during the infancy and adolescence of the conservation profession. A simple treatment involving minimal risk and contact with the painting may be easily warranted, while an aggressive wet-cleaning method without assured outcome is cause for consideration.

2. A careful evaluation of the surface is performed to determine if the piece can withstand whatever plan of treatment is designed. Is the surface stable? Are there areas of poor adhesion, weakly bound paints or fragile areas? What is the surface sheen and how will it be affected? Is the piece varnished, and if so, can the varnish be safely removed? It is extremely useful to know the materials used by the artist in the painting. For this reason it is helpful for the artist to provide documentation with the painting that details support preparation, type of media, isolation coat and varnish used. A copy of this record should also be retained by the artist.

3. The nature of what is being removed is determined. Is it dirt or grime on the surface? Is it dirt embedded, or both?

4. Realize that any surface contact should be minimized, so initial cleaning attempts should be designed accordingly. One method is to use compressed air to blow away surface dust. Another technique involves a soft sable brush to lightly brush the surface in order to dislodge dust while holding a vacuum source, off the surface, to capture and remove debris.

5. If the dirt is embedded and vacuuming doesn't remove all of it, the next level of intervention involves dry cleaning methods (not to be confused with solvent washing of clothing) with more aggressive surface contact. Materials described as hydrophobic sponges and molecular traps that are able to overcome the physical adhesion between the dirt and paint film, without imparting their own residue, are used. Erasers and similar materials that may fill in the pores of the paint should not be used. It may be possible to use tape to lift dirt from a painting, as long as there is assurance it will not leave a residue. Whenever a cleaning

Continued next page...
method is used involving surface contact, it is advised that paintings on flexible supports be suitably backed to minimize surface deflection and equalize working resistance.

6. As a last resort, a cleaning method utilizing moisture may be required. Generally, this applies only to stable, undamaged surfaces. Potential dangers of such an approach are that liquid cleaning may actually drive dirt deeper and make matters worse or can create tide lines in the support, which result from soluble material concentrating at the wet edge. It is also theorized that wet cleaning at the surface will create rheological differences in the paint film.

An effective and time tested cleaning technique is euphemistically referred to as “enzymatic cleaning”. It involves moistening a clean cotton swab in the mouth and rolling it across the painting’s surface. Saliva is warm and contains enzymes which act upon both lipids and proteins, two common components of “dirt”. It is important to note that the correct procedure is to roll the swab across the surface, as opposed to rubbing it, which could cause abrasion. The process must be extremely gentle and it is important to keep the moisture on the surface to a minimum. The procedure is started by testing in a small area of the painting judged to be least noticeable. At each step of the treatment, the painting is carefully examined for changes in gloss and color pickup on the swab. Sometimes it is necessary to work through “Japanese Tissue”, which allows the dirt and moisture to wick away from the painting. Deionized water may also be an appropriate choice for moist cleaning.

As an aside to the procedure of working with a cotton swab in small areas, we have heard concerns that this may lead to the surface appearing mottled. Presumably, this would result from slight differences in factors such as the amount of moisture or pressure used, or the amount of dirt removed.

7. The final step (and the first step) is to evaluate the conditions which led to the need for treatment. Can a cleaner environment be found? Should a removable varnish be applied?

**Recommendations**

If aesthetically appropriate, apply an isolation coat and varnish to acrylic paintings to facilitate ease of cleaning. Use a removable varnish such as GOLDEN Polymer Varnish or MSA Varnish. The removable varnish layer allows the painting’s surface to be cleaned at a much lower risk. If it becomes scratched or if dirt does become permanently embedded in this layer, the varnish layer can be sacrificed by removing it (consult GOLDEN Technical Data Sheets for Polymer Varnish and MSA Varnish for removal techniques), and a fresh layer of varnish can be applied to restore the painting to its original appearance.

Practice proactive prevention. Display paintings in the cleanest, lowest traffic areas possible. Vacuum or mop these areas, rather than sweeping, to minimize airborne dusts.

Minimize exposure of acrylics to elevated temperature, especially in combination with dusty conditions. Such areas may be near hot air inlets, in direct sunlight or attics.

Minimize frequency of direct contact, such as dusting of unprotected acrylic surfaces. Instead, use compressed air.

Seek out professional services as appropriate for the piece and conditions. By virtue of training, experience, tools and techniques, the risk of damage to the painting will be much less if it is cleaned by a reputable professional in the field of fine art conservation.

Recognizing the need for specific techniques for protecting as well as cleaning acrylic paintings, we invite response from conservation professionals who wish to share their experiences.

The following people are thanked and acknowledged for independently sharing information for this article.

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Any errors or omissions are the sole responsibility of the author.

Ben Gavett,
Golden Artist Colors, Inc.

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**ABSTRACT**

New Neutral Gray Technical Information Sheet Available on WEB

The lab recently produced a new Technical Information Sheet for GOLDEN Neutral Gray Heavy Body Acrylics. It describes color theory of mixing with these achromatic grays, recommendations for using them in painting, and provides spectrophotometric reflectance curves for the series. Also included is a table of Neutral Gray Values for all GOLDEN Heavy Body Acrylics for use as a reference when mixing. This and numerous other technical information sheets covering product performance, physical characteristics, and more detailed product description and use information may be obtained by calling us at (888)397-2468. Many of these may also be viewed at our web site, www.goldenpaints.com.
Gesso Survey Results Insightful for Subcommittee

Many of the artists who took the time to complete and return the Gesso Survey we ran in Just Paint, Issue 4 also used that opportunity to ask questions and make comments about our products, Just Paint, etc. There was also a lot of interest in finding out what the results of the survey were. To the nearly 300 people participating, thank you. Herein are the results of the survey, followed by responses to frequently asked questions and other comments that were made.

The Purpose of the Survey

The purpose of the survey was to collect information on current practices of support preparation. The size and priming layers of paintings are a critical interface between the support and paint layer. Acrylic gesso is a popular ground for both oil and acrylic painting. This has created interest among members of the Artist Materials Subcommittee of the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), to produce a voluntary quality or performance standard for acrylic gesso. There currently are several ASTM standards relating to artist materials. For example, "Conforms to ASTM D 4236" on a product’s label means it has been evaluated and labeled for potential acute and chronic health hazards. There are also ASTM quality standards for different types of artist media, including Acrylic (D 5098), Oil/Resin-Oil (D 4302), Watercolor (D 5067) and Gouache (D 5724) paints. Manufacturers’ labeling their colors as conforming to any of these are voluntarily providing assurance to the consumer that the paints meet criteria for lightfastness testing and labeling as well as disclosure of the pigments used. Use of these standards allow artists to choose materials that are of the highest archival integrity.

By understanding where and how acrylic gesso is used, application practices, and attributes important to artists, an ASTM Acrylic Gesso Standard can be designed that will address as many needs as possible. This will not result in one generic product, without brand differentiation, that will be suitable for all applications. Conforming products can still enjoy a unique balance of individual characteristics such as sandability, color, absorbency, texture and application characteristics. However, if universal properties are appropriate, such as lightfastness, stability or use of 100% acrylic in "acrylic" gesso, then all products in conformance will be of similar quality. It is the general theme in developing ASTM quality standards for art materials to concentrate on factors contributing to archival integrity while leaving ample room for individual variations in products. With the variety of supports and media being used, every conforming product will not be suitable for use in all applications. A more appropriate result would be for the manufacturer of the conforming product to provide for use must describe the application parameters necessary to prevent oil penetration to the support.

Benefits of ASTM Standard

The primary benefit of developing this Standard within ASTM is that the committee is a group comprised of members from many perspectives. Working together on this project are artists, art material manufacturers and conservation scientists.

From this latter group, we expect help answering the more difficult questions, those dealing with the aging characteristics of works of art as influenced by the diversity of the materials used in their composition. To do this, the project plan calls for artificial aging of samples, followed by controlled...
Gesso Survey Results

degradation studies at conservation laboratories. Another important study would focus on the mechanics at the interface between paint layers of different chemical composition, such as oil over an acrylic ground. The net result of this work is hoped to be the identification of the "ideal" combination of support, size and ground for a given type of paint.

Summary of Survey Responses

1. Regarding the media artists paint with, we heard from users of most types of paints, including Oil, Acrylic, Watercolor, Gouache, Encaustic, Inks, Casein, Urethane, Egg Tempera and Pastel.

While the nature of our mailing list influenced the response, 30 percent paint primarily in acrylic, 5 percent in oil, and most of the rest use some combination of oil, acrylic and watercolor.

2 & 7. Just over 90% reported they Stretch and Prepare their own supports, with canvas the most popular, followed by rigid supports and then paper.

About 30% also reported using commercially preprimed canvas (Asked in question 7).

3. Over half of the oil painters responding report underpainting their oil paintings with acrylic.

In general, there are concerns that this approach may lead to premature loss of adhesion of the oil paint because the acrylics may lack sufficient tooth to ensure a good mechanical lock between the paint films. Acrylic gesso is different because it is formulated to provide a toothy surface which promotes adhesion.

4 & 6. Do you size? We defined size as "a dilute solution of material applied to porous supports to prevent absorption of paints". This is most relevant in regard to oil paints, where the support should be protected from absorption of oil, the acidic nature of which may cause deterioration. A "size" under acrylic paintings is also useful, if painting thickly in relatively transparent passages, to prevent Support Induced Discoloration, which is caused when the water and surfactant from acrylics wash materials from the support and allow them to migrate to the paint layer and discolor the painting.

Just over one half of all painters indicated they do not size. About one third of acrylic painters report sizing, most use a polymer medium.

A few painters indicated using rabbit skin glue. We recommend against this practice because rabbit skin glue remains permanently water-soluble. Under conditions of high humidity, a porous support such as canvas allows moisture to enter the glue layer which leads to swelling, followed by contraction as humidity drops. These cycles may lead to adhesion failure. Lack of flexibility of hide glue also makes it more susceptible to cracking from mishandling, and these cracks may transfer to the upper layers of the painting.

It was interesting to learn that most of the oil painters responding do not use a size. In addition to blocking oil penetration, a size functions to stiffen a flexible support, providing greater working resistance to the brush by removing some of the "bounce" of the stretched fabric. A stiff, permanent size may also decrease the likelihood of crack development by enhancing dimensional stability of the fabric against stresses resulting from changes in ambient conditions and shipping and handling. Our testing has shown that applying a sufficient number of

layers of acrylic gesso will prevent oil penetration through to the support, but does little to stiffen it. There would still be benefit, when oil painting on flexible supports, from applying a size. For this, we recommend GOLDEN GAC 400, an acrylic polymer medium that is considerably less flexible than most.

5. Do you prime? The vast majority of painters responding to the survey report priming with acrylic. About 7% use lead based primer for some applications and 2-3% use housepainted. The prevalence of using acrylic gesso, particularly in combination with oil paint, underscores the desire within ASTM to be able to provide more definitive answers to questions regarding the best attributes for an acrylic gesso and how the materials will stand the test of time compared to traditional oil grounds.

8. For important attributes, resistance to changes in heat and humidity was ranked as the most important characteristic of a primer. This was followed by, in order of decreasing importance; flexibility, opacity, ease of application, lightfastness, surface texture, brightness, absorbency, price and transparency.

9. Have you noticed delamination? This question was asked in order to help determine the extent and type of failure related to primers and sizes. While there were numerous responses indicating that some form of delamination was observed, most either between the support and primer or the primer and paint, insufficient information was received regarding the types of materials used to allow us to identify key problem areas.
Gesso Survey Results

Survey reveals more questions

As mentioned previously, many people responding to the survey took the opportunity to ask additional questions and make comments. There were many common ideas and suggestions. For example, several indicated they would like a colored gesso. We currently manufacture Gesso in White and Black (thank you to everyone raving about the latter). Interestingly enough, GOLDEN Artist Colors introduced a line of "Colored Gesso" in 1987. Made from the same artist grade pigments as our Heavy Body Colors, they are not merely color added to white gesso, but are singly pigmented with the addition of non-pigment solids to provide the tooth appropriate for an acrylic ground. They are very opaque, and have an exceptionally rich, matte, velvet-like finish. Because of their appearance, more artists preferred to paint with them than use them as grounds. Subsequently, the line was renamed "High Load Acrylic," which aptly describes the pigment volume concentration but also effectively obscures the original intent of the product.

To prevent potential film formation problems while drying, High Load colors should be applied relatively thinly. Thick applications sometimes exhibit a phenomenon known as mud-cracking. Another characteristic of the colors to be aware of is that the dried film is extremely marable and susceptible to burning. Accidental contact with the surface or wrapping a painting executed in High Load Acrylic Colors will quite likely result in a noticeable blemish.

Another common theme in the comments we received back from the survey was a desire for a specific amount of relative absorbency in the ground layer. It seems that for many people, the Gesso they currently use is either too absorbent or not absorbent enough.

Generally, acrylic gesso should be toothy. It should provide a porous surface with lots of nooks and crannies for the subsequent layer of paint to grip. This is particularly important when using combinations of media, such as oil over acrylic. This toothiness is achieved on a microscopic level by the selection of non-pigment solids used in the formulation. It is not just a surface characteristic. The voids extend through the entire thickness of the paint film. For this reason, Gesso is very absorbent relative to other acrylic media and can work well to anchor both acrylic and other types of paint to it. When this is not desired by the artist, the gesso or its surface can be modified to be less absorbent.

One way to do this is to alter the balance between acrylic and solids in the product by mixing in GOLDEN Fluid Matte Medium, or GOLDEN Soft Matte Gel in any amount desired. Transparency and the gloss will increase as extra medium is added, and the absorbency and tooth will decrease. Some people answering the survey reported they simply prefer to use Matte Titanium White as a ground, which provides less absorption but maintains good opacity. However, a thick application of an acrylic paint such as this directly to canvas will have somewhat less adhesion because it will not saturate the support as well. This can be overcome if the acrylic paint is applied in a manner that forces it into the weave of the canvas, such as by using a squeegee.

When the desire is for a more

Continued next page...
absorbent Gesso, as required by watercolor artists, we recommend GOLDEN Absorbent Ground, available in either White or Canvas Color. This is formulated to be exceptionally absorbent, similar to using watercolor paper. The degree of absorbency is determined by the number of layers of Absorbent Ground applied.

Another frequent response on the Survey was a desire for a textured Gesso. Those requiring this may want to try GOLDEN Acrylic Ground for Pastel, which was designed to provide sufficient tooth for uniform laydown of pastels on any prepared surface. This product is translucent so it reveals the underlying surface. If desired, it can be applied over standard Acrylic Gesso or colors. Another effective way to achieve a more textured surface is to combine GOLDEN Gesso with GOLDEN Fine Pumice Gel or GOLDEN Coarse Pumice Gel.

Finally, for those people indicating they need a surface that can be sanded to a very smooth finish, we recommend GOLDEN Sandable Hard Gesso. It is available in white only and is slightly more absorbent than our regular Gesso. It can only be used on rigid supports due to a tendency to crack when flexed, but can be sanded to a highly polished surface.

The responses to our Gesso Survey emphasized that one product cannot be designed to meet everyone's needs. In most applications, a traditionally opaque ground is called for, but sometimes a transparent ground that seals the support and provides enough tooth for subsequent paint layers is required. Differences are also desired in color, texture and viscosity. Preference for a highly sandable surface often outweighs the competing attribute of flexibility. These needs can all be effectively met, not with one product, but with selection of one from a variety of products or combinations thereof. It remains important that the user understand the limitations and the attributes of each particular material; for example that oil can seep through porous acrylic ground, that Sandable Hard Gesso can crack if flexed, etc. Support preparation is a key factor in how well a painting will age. By tailoring the product to the application, the requirements of the artist can be met while ensuring that the need for structural integrity is addressed.

If you would like to sample any of the grounds, mediums or gels mentioned in this article, or have questions or comments in regard to this information, please contact us at GOLDEN Artist Colors.
Continued from Front

Sam Golden, Paintmaking Pioneer and Founder of Golden Artist Colors Passes Away at 82.

On July 11, 1997, the Golden family and Golden Artist Colors marked Sam’s passing with a memorial program at the facility in Columbus, New York.

Speaking to the over 200 people assembled were family friend, Charles Kelly, Sr., sons, Tom Golden and Mark Golden, and artists and friends of Sam’s, Bob Huot, Ronnie Landfield, Susan Roth, Darryl Hughto and David Headley. The celebration of Sam’s life also included a show of his paintings produced within the last 2 years of his life. Clearly, Sam at 82 was still ready for another career.

Many personal remembrances were shared this July evening, and together they formed a wonderful woven history of Sam and of his work, life and character.

One of the speakers, Susan Roth, shared this insight with the assembled friends - “Sam and I shared something in common three things that matter in life: 1) A curiosity about life. Sam approached every day as a new day that contained something to be learned. He never stopped growing. 2) Sam had an amazing ability to observe things from the outside, look into someone’s thoughts, and understand the bigger picture, the personal issue. 3) The capacity to do the “loving deed”. That sense of sharing and giving beyond yourself. He and Adele were wonderful at helping people feel a part of the moment and including them in whatever was going on at the time. You always felt welcome and cared for.”

The Beginning at Bocour

Sam began his paint making career in 1936 at Bocour Artist Colors, a company he eventually co-owned with his uncle Leonard Bocour. Sam and Leonard began by producing hand-ground oil colors for artists in Manhattan. It was a very exciting time in the arts, as New York grew in its reputation as the world’s art center. Artists like de Kooning, Newman and Louis were regular visitors at the Bocour shop on 15th Street. The shop became a hang out of sorts for many artists, and at times Bocour customers would set up their pads or easels and draw or paint in the tiny shop. It was Sam’s work directly with artists and the products that he developed as a result of these collaborations with painters that became the inspiration for his entire paint making career. It was this central motif that he carried forward in the creation of Golden Artist Colors, Inc.

Early Experimental Acrylics

During the 1940’s, Sam started his experimental work with the first acrylic for artist’s use, Magna. It was a tremendous challenge to begin working with the new acrylic resin. As he began formulating the product, he continued to work with artists like Alfred Leslie and Morris Louis. The new paint was created out of this dialogue with artists who were exploring the needs for new materials to meet their new faster and freeer painting styles.

Sam experimented with many materials during the 40’s and 50’s.
He experimented with the early polyester resins, and also began his work on the water borne acrylic systems. As an artist paint formulator he was always confronted with the fact that "there are no pat formulas for artist colors. Resin manufacturers make products for commercial or home applications, not for artists." Sam would describe the difficulty involved in artist paint formulation, "To make a paint sit up instead of laying down. To use full color concentration instead of tints. To maintain a stable system no matter the conditions or use of the materials". Sam's rebuff to any technical dilemma was "Don't tell me it can't be done, just let me be ignorant and let me believe that it can. Now, please get out of my way and let me do it!"

iridescent artist colors, the first lightfast alizarin hue in acrylic (Quinacridone Crimson), the first stable Zinc White in acrylic and the development of water tension breaker (Acrylic Flow Release).

Since the development of Golden Artist Colors in 1980, his company has developed over 1000 custom paints for artists, conservators and many individuals and businesses requiring the special services of custom coatings.

Out of Retirement and Into Business

After over 35 years as a paintmaker, Sam retired from his partnership with Leonard Bocour, and along with his wife, Adele, bought a small farm in Upstate New York in Chenango County. After trying retirement for 7 years, and at the age of 67, he decided to go back into the business he loved - making paint for artists. In 1980, Sam invited his son, Mark, to join him in the formation of the new company - Golden Artist Colors, Inc.

Golden Artist Colors began auspiciously in the small barn on the site of Sam's retirement home.

The company consisted of Sam and his wife Adele, Mark and his wife Barbara, and their first employee (and now partner), Chuck Kelly.

Their vision was to create products for professional artists.

Today, with 75 employees, the company continues the unique collaborative relationship Sam established between paintmakers and artists. By listening to the creative customer, GOLDEN has produced a line of products unequalled by any other company in the industry. It is no surprise that Sam's company is the benchmark by which other brands are measured. Golden Artist Colors' commitment to the original tenet of Sam Golden - to be the best resource for artists in the world - remains strong and constant and serves as a lasting tribute to this wonderful man.

The Sam and Adele Foundation for the Arts, Inc.

The Sam and Adele Golden Foundation for the Arts, a not-for-profit foundation, has been established to support professional artists and their work.

The Foundation will help foster and thank the community of artists that has supported the lifetime work of Sam and Adele Golden. For information about the Foundation, please contact Nancy Root at Golden Artist Colors, at 800-959-6543.
WHAT'S NEW!

New GOLDEN Glazes!
40 GOLDEN Glaze Colors are now available in 4oz., pint and quart sizes. They feature a complete color palette as well as metallics, iridescent and opal colors. The Glazes are ready-to-use mixtures of GOLDEN Acrylic Glazing Liquid and GOLDEN Acrylic Color. The properties of this combination allow fine artists more working time for applying thin glazes and blending color. They are extremely useful for glazing over underpaintings and working on paper. Call 800-959-6543 for information and color chart.

Garnet Gels!
Garnet Gels are produced with a 100% acrylic polymer binder and Almandine Garnet, a mined material. They offer a range of granular textures similar to the Pumice Gel, but with a natural reddish-brown hue. They dry to hard, semi-opaque films with very good flexibility. Available in Fine, Coarse and Extra Coarse. Call 800-959-6543 for further information.