



Applying the finishing touches

The final look of a painting is determined by various elements: surface material, tools and technique employed.

Surface

The **surface** on which the artist paints his subject can be **flexible** like canvas, paper, fiber-board or leather, or **rigid** like glass, wood, hardboard (also called plywood¹), copper, aluminum, glass or wall.

Canvases can be made from cotton, linen, silk or other synthetic materials; hardboard panels are made from oak, cedar, birch, walnut or mahogany. Softwoods like pine are not suitable for painting because they contain resins and tend to crack.

All these materials must be primed² for painting. Usually three coats of **acrylic gesso** are given to prepare the canvas, board or paper. Some artists sand³ the surface between each coat to produce a completely **smooth** surface. Others do not sand in between the coats to create a **rough** painting surface. Another advantage of the three coats of gesso is that the colours will be brighter.

Tools and techniques

To apply paint on a canvas the artist can use **brushes** with different sizes and shapes (tiny,⁴ pointed, flat, wide) or other **tools** like special knives, sponges and even his fingers.

Different **techniques** can be used so to create special visual textures.⁵ For instance, the artist can paint holding the brush upright⁶ or flat, giving the brush a stronger or lighter pressure with a variety of **strokes** (soft, quick, circular, U-shaped, etc.), loading the brush with thick or diluted colours, applying the paint in thick coats, putting colours on top of each other or mixing in other materials (buttons, ropes, sand, etc.).

GLOSSARY

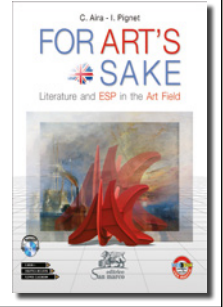
- 1 a material consisting of layers of wood glued over each other
- 2 prepared
- 3 make smooth using sand-paper
- 4 extremely small
- 5 surface structures
- 6 vertical

ACTIVITIES

Reading comprehension

1 *Decide whether the following statements are true T or false F and correct the false ones.*

- | | | | | |
|--|---|--------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| 1 An artist can paint only on a flexible surface. | T | <input type="checkbox"/> | F | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 2 Natural fibres and synthetic materials are used to make flexible surfaces. | T | <input type="checkbox"/> | F | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 3 Pinewood is the most suitable for painting on hardboard panels. | T | <input type="checkbox"/> | F | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 4 Priming is necessary to prepare flexible surfaces for painting. | T | <input type="checkbox"/> | F | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 5 Sand is used for priming the surfaces. | T | <input type="checkbox"/> | F | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 6 If the coats are not sanded the surface is rough. | T | <input type="checkbox"/> | F | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 7 The three coats of acrylic gesso desaturate the colours. | T | <input type="checkbox"/> | F | <input type="checkbox"/> |



2 Look at the paintings and identify the surface they are painted on, choosing from the following suggestions. There are more words than necessary.
canvas – paper – cloth – wood – steel – glass – ceramic – rock

- | | |
|---------|---------|
| 1 | 4 |
| 2 | 5 |
| 3 | 6 |



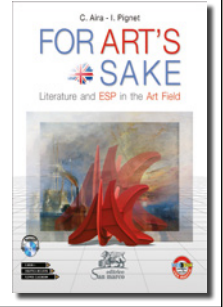
Vocabulary

3 Working in pairs read the text again and find the English equivalent for each of the following Italian words.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1 Compensato/truciolato
..... | 4 Quercia
..... | 7 Strato
..... |
| 2 Cuio
..... | 5 Betulla
..... | 8 Tela
..... |
| 3 Noce
..... | 6 Seta
..... | |

4 Read the list below and tick the names of the materials and tools a painter uses to make his works. Then provide the Italian word for each material and tool.

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hammer..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Steel..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Palette..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Hardwood..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Marble..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Mallet..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> File..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Oil paints..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Copper..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Water-colours..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Canvas..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Turpentine..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Paint box..... | <input type="checkbox"/> Plaster..... |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sketchbook..... | |



Reading comprehension

5 On the right you see a detail of the painting by Vincent van Gogh. Decide whether the following statements are true **T** or false **F** and correct the false ones.

- 1 The sky is painted with U-shaped and wavy strokes. **T** **F**
- 2 The colour is diluted and applied in thin coats. **T** **F**
- 3 The artist uses white, green and yellow on a blue base to create the nuances of colour in the sky. **T** **F**
- 4 For the hills he uses a lot of black on a gray surface. **T** **F**
- 5 The outline of the hills is neatly defined by thick curved and wavy lines. **T** **F**
- 6 The brushstrokes are long and delicate. **T** **F**
- 7 The trees are painted with short, quick brushstrokes. **T** **F**
- 8 The use of lighter and darker hues makes them flat. **T** **F**



Vincent van Gogh, Wheat Field with Cypresses (detail).