

## Indirect Painting

**Quick Overview of this technique:** The Entire canvas covered with dark imprimatura wash, and linear drawing with brush applied on top. Image built dark-to-light in monochrome, finished with glazes to establish hue contrasts

"Old Master" technique-chiaroscuro, thin layered darks, opaque lights.



**More in depth:** Indirect painting involves procedures in which the final effects in a picture are built up gradually by placing several layers of paint, one over the other, the upper layers modifying, but not altogether concealing, the lower layers.

Indirect painters put their first strokes on the canvas with the expectation that they will paint over them again when they are dry in order to change their effect in some way. Therefore when they put on the first layer of paint, called the underpainting, they do not try for a finished effect, complete in final color, drawing definition, and pattern emphasis. Instead at the beginning of the work they concentrate on one or two of these problems, and they depend upon [and make allowance for] the subsequent layers of paint to develop and modify the underpainting until the remaining problems are finally solved.

Indirect methods of painting have been employed in the past by many artists including Van Eyck, El Greco, and Rembrandt. More recently such painters as Soutine, Modigliani, Rouault, Braque, and Paul Klee have utilized the optical effects of indirect processes.

The existence of indirect painting arises from the fact that although paint may be used opaquely to conceal what is beneath it, it can also be applied so as to be transparent, revealing to a greater or lesser extent what it covers.

The directly mixed tone underneath will have a weighty solid opacity, whereas the transparent tone produced through the indirect, or optical, mixture of the two colors will have a more luminous vibration, rather like that seen in stained glass when light passes through it.

By exploiting this characteristic of the oil technique, painters found that they could develop a brilliant luminosity whose exact character was unobtainable in the direct techniques. The procedures most commonly used in indirect painting are called glazing and scumbling.