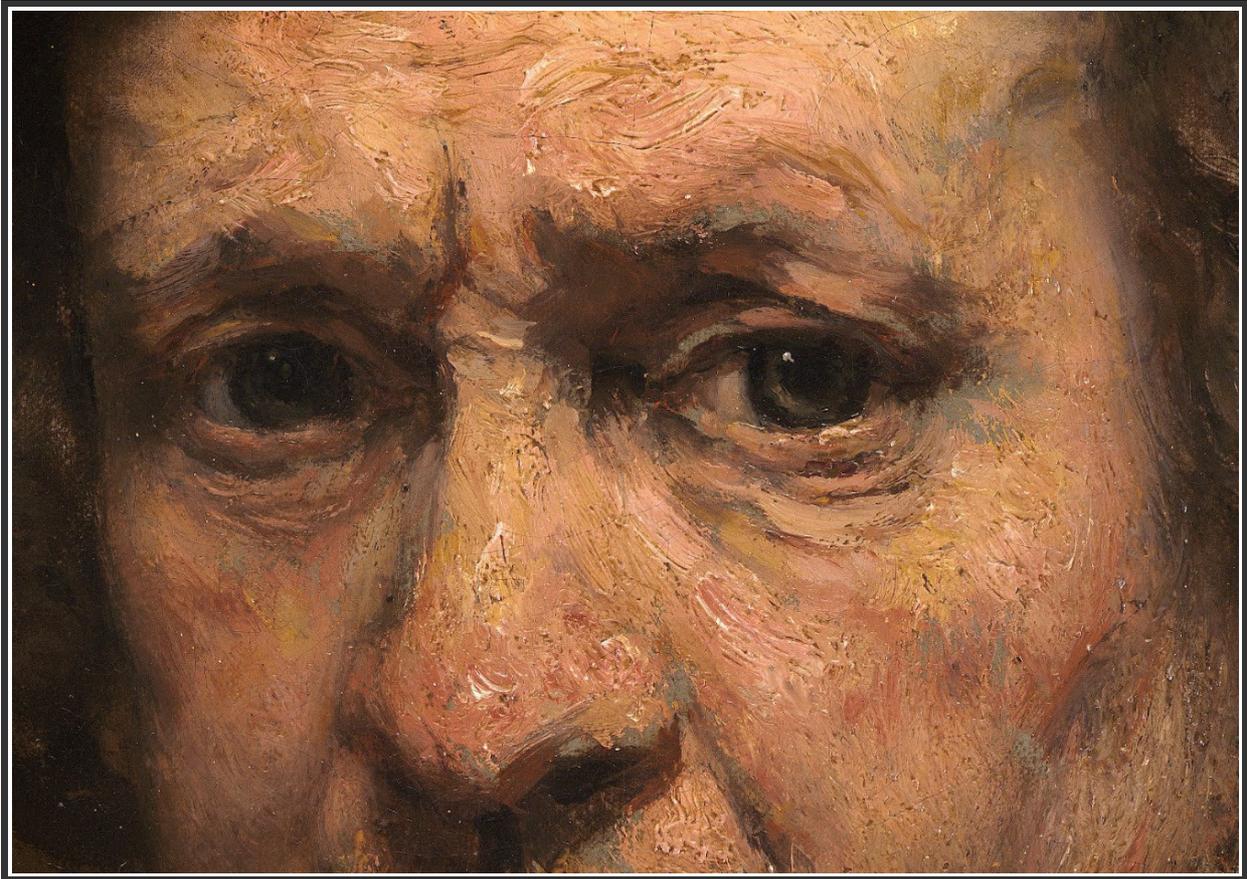




**atelier** florent farges  
arts figuratifs

## SAFETY AND MATERIAL FOR OIL PAINTING



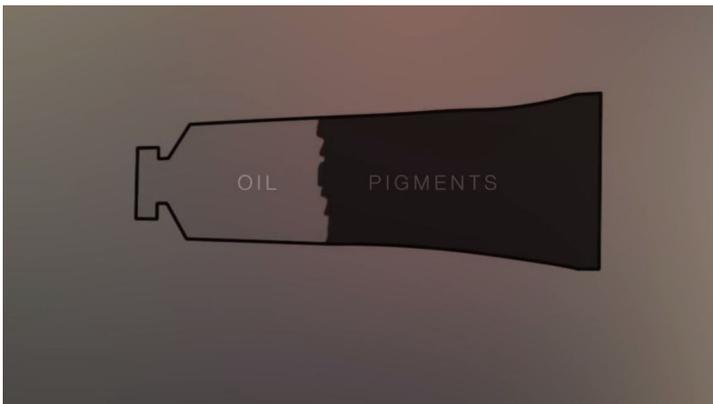
Rembrandt - Selfportrait (detail) 1659

The content of this document is based on the video guide : *The Practical guide to oil painting techniques and materials.*

## Hazardous products and studio safety

Many people do not want to give oil painting a try for fear of toxicity. But there is a common misconception in saying that oil paint is toxic. The practice of oil painting without proper care can indeed be unsafe, but the danger doesn't come from the paint itself. It is very important to understand exactly what is dangerous and what is not.

→ Ingestion hazards



Oil painting is not toxic by itself. A basic paint tube only contains oil and pigments.

Pigments can be dangerous for your lungs if you grind them yourself or if you make your own paint with powder pigments and oil. If it's the case, you need to wear a safety mask and protect your eyes.



Most pigments are harmless but some are dangerous if ingested :

Lead is the most toxic pigment, it is the base for flake white or kremnitz white. Lead has been subjected to a lot of restrictions in many countries.





Other pigments can cause heavy metal poisoning if ingested, like cadmium or cobalt. Visit the website of your manufacturer to check the safety data sheets of the products you purchase if you have doubts.

Considering the quantities at stakes, these pigments are only dangerous if ingested. Good studio practices help make their use safer, for instance :

- Do not lick your brush or put its handle in your mouth.
- Do not keep food or drinks around your paint.
- Always wash your hands properly every time you take a break.
- Keep your studio clean.
- Wash your hands if you have paint on them.

→ Inhalation hazards

The real risk surrounding oil painting doesn't come from the paint but from the solvents used to thin it down. These products evaporate and the resulting fumes end up in the air around your painting. These fumes are harmful and shouldn't be inhaled.



There are modern solutions to paint solvent-free, like water soluble oil painting, but if you use the traditional approach, it's almost impossible to avoid using solvents altogether. But don't worry, there are ways to paint safely when using solvents, you have to follow this three-fold strategy :

**1. Use as little solvent as possible**

The first point, using as little solvent as possible is not hard to do once you realize that you don't need that much solvent. Here are a few tips to use a little solvent as possible :

Idea #1 - You can use soap and water for cleaning instead of solvent.



IDEA #1 : YOU CAN USE SOAP AND WATER FOR CLEANING BRUSHES INSTEAD OF SOLVENT.

Idea #2 - When using a medium, you don't have to pour a large quantity of it in a jar and let it evaporate next to your palette, you can simply use droppers and use only what you need.



IDEA #2 : DON'T POUR MEDIUM IN AN OPEN JAR, USE DROPPERS AND USE ONLY WHAT YOU NEED.

Idea #3 - You can avoid washing your brushes in solvent before changing colors, you can just wipe off the old paint in a piece of paper towel or a piece of rag.



## 2. Keep everything shut

Keeping every jar containing solvent shut is not really that hard, but it is a good habit to get into. Here's what you can do :

- Never leave a solvent container open.
- Do not use solvent in a jar to clean your brushes when painting, simply use rags or paper towel.
- Store your solvent and medium jars in an airtight box.
- Throw rags that have been used to absorb solvent in a closed bin.
- Always have a plastic bag to dispose of them and tie it nicely.
- Finally, never pour your solvent down the drain, take it to a waste disposal facility.

## 3. Paint in a well ventilated studio

Using solvents in a well ventilated studio should be your first concern regarding safety and oil painting. If you have a mechanical ventilation system, you have nothing to worry about. If not, use natural ventilation : open two windows every couple of hours to renew the air in your studio.

If you think about ventilating regularly and avoid excess when using solvents, the air in your studio should be safe. But you should know that even with the best ventilation in the world, there are still some things that should be done outside or in an open garage and not inside. These things are :

- Varnishing, because it creates a lot of fumes.
- Staining a canvas with OMS or alkyd medium.
- Cleaning tools with solvent or any other task that requires a lot of solvent.

→ Skin contact hazards

You should avoid skin contact when dealing with oil painting products. Solvents are easily absorbed by your skin so every time you touch some of it, you should immediately wash your hands.



Likewise, every time you accidentally get paint on your skin, you should immediately wash it. You don't want it to penetrate your skin through cuts or scratches, or accidentally ingest some of it. It's very important to clean up your paint regularly and keep your studio organised.

Having an clean and organised studio is not just a matter of character, it's also a matter of safety.

For messy work like cleaning up or preparing products, use latex gloves.

→ Linseed oil combustion risks

The final risk you have to be aware of is the spontaneous combustion of linseed oil soaked rags. Being a drying oil, linseed oil polymerize using oxygen, which produces heat. When this reaction occurs on the canvas, the heat is impossible to notice, but if too much heat is trapped in a confined place, like a big ball of linseed oil soaked rags or paper towel, it might start a fire.



Generally speaking, oil painters don't use large enough quantities of linseed oil for this to happen. Most of the time, it happens when people stain wooden furniture. But if you ever use excessive amount of oil or spill the content of a linseed oil bottle, you should dispose of the used rags properly :



- Before disposal, rags used with linseed oil should be allowed to dry completely in a safe place, away from flammable materials.
- When completely dry, store rags in an airtight metal container away from combustible materials. Rags can also be soaked in water.

This is a risk you should know for safety, but you don't need to worry too much as an oil painter, because the quantities are not big enough to produce a lot of heat. Ordinary rags that have just been used to wipe off paint aren't a risk.

## Basic material to start oil painting

To keep it simple, I'll just mention the minimal requirements you need to start with oil paint. This is just a basic set to start with, you'll probably want to purchase more material as you become more experienced.

Minimal requirements 1 : brushes



The brushes you need can vary depending on your style and the size of the painting you want to do... but a good minimal starting set would count at least 10 brushes :

7 or 8 hog bristle of different sizes (filbert and flats) : medium, large and small...these should be your go to brushes, the good thing is that they are relatively inexpensive.



2 round brushes : you can find decent synthetic nowadays, so maybe it's best for a starting kit. But if you save enough on all the rest, you can also invest in one or two red sable or kolinsky sable : of course this is a lot more expensive but in the end, it's worth buying if you manage to save money on the rest.



Most importantly, take good care of you brushes. Wash them properly but don't be too hard on them while you do that. Because they will wear off if you wash them too much or too hard.

## Minimal requirements 2 : paint

Paint is probably 80% of your budget. I don't encourage to use student grade or low quality range of paints. You should always prefer extra fine paint.



Palette composition ideas :

### Earth tones palette :

titanium white, yellow ochre, burnt sienna, venetian red, permanent alizarin crimson, burnt umber and ultramarine blue.

### Basic palette :

titanium white, cadmium yellow light, cadmium red, permanent alizarin crimson, turquoise blue, ultramarine blue, ivory black

Of course, as you go on, you will probably feel the need to add some other colors, but at least you can start with these.



If you're on a tight budget, you might want to avoid the cadmiums. Don't forget that you don't need a lot of colors to paint. Sometimes the creative and harmonious things come from a limited range of colors. Having a hundred of paint tubes doesn't always help.

### Minimal requirements 3 : painting surface

The last thing to consider, and not the least, is the quality of your surface. It's very important.

Ask your retailer about the quality of the different canvases they sell, but usually, I suggest to avoid cheap pre-stretched canvases. It's hard to say what makes a good surface without feeling it : trust your fingers, the surface should have a nice even « tooth », be properly stretched and the stretchers bars should feel sturdy.

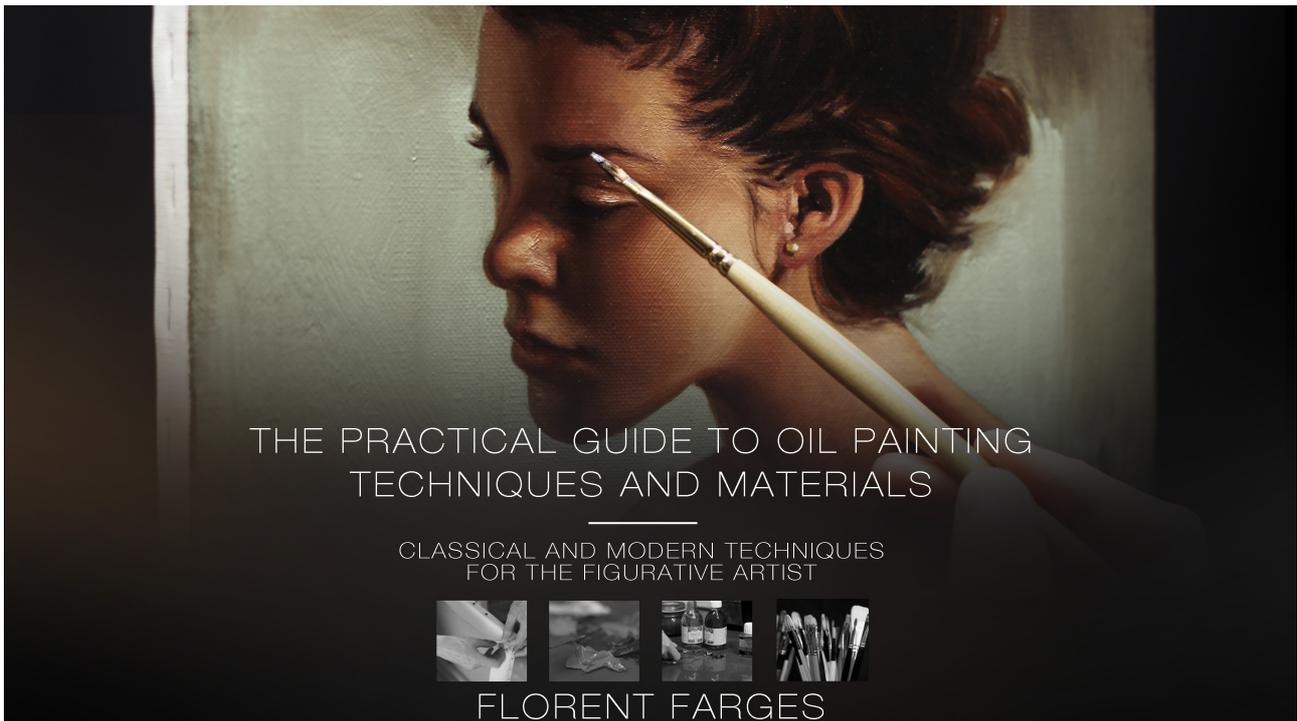
Buying rolls might help you save a little bit of money... Some artist buy the raw canvas and do the sizing and priming themselves, but this is not necessarily something you want to spend too much time if you're just beginning.



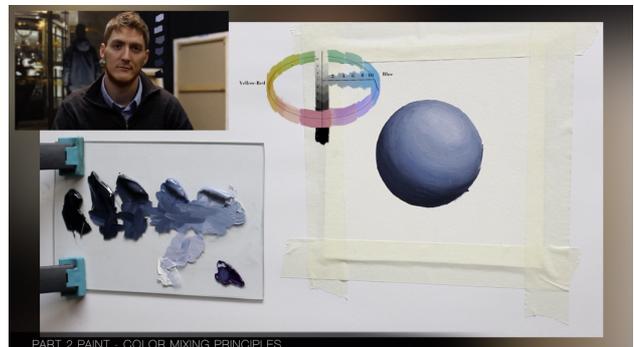
Finally, if you don't need big surfaces, the cheapest option is to prime wooden panels yourself with gesso.

You can find gesso ready to use or in powder... I leave it to you to find what is the best option for you...

## LEARN MORE ABOUT PAINTING



### A VIDEO GUIDE FOR ALL SKILL LEVELS



### AN ALL-INCLUSIVE VIDEO GUIDE FOCUSED ON TECHNIQUE

*The Practical guide to oil painting techniques and materials* is a 5 hours video guide focused on techniques and materials. It covers all the various practical issues oil painters have to face from the preparation of the surface to varnishing.



Unlike many painting videos, this program doesn't just present one way of painting but reviews a wide variety of different options so that you can come up with your own painting process and make the best out of the content of this video.

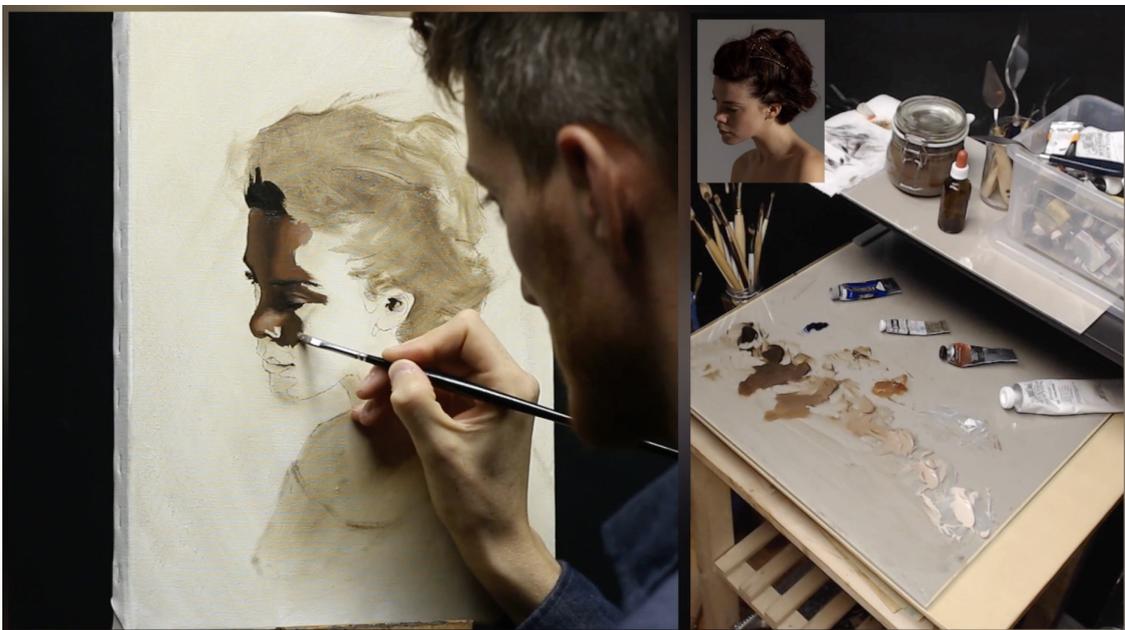
## **COMPLEX KNOWLEDGE MADE CLEAR AND STRAIGHT TO THE POINT**

This program is conceived to explain the reasons behind things in a clear and simple way. Florent is great at making complicated things sound simple. You may have come upon Florent's unique way of explaining oil painting techniques in one of his [YouTube](#) videos. In this program, he makes his knowledge available in a very comprehensive way.



## **A COMPLETE PORTRAIT DEMONSTRATION**

What good is theory if you don't know how it applies to an actual painting situation? The point of this portrait demonstration is to illustrate as many techniques as possible and present an effective painting process that will allow painters from all skill levels to improve significantly.



The process is based on the indirect approach to painting, which implies painting with multiple layers, starting with an underpainting, a first painting and a second painting. This classical approach is great for experienced artists as well as beginners. It allows careful planning and makes correcting mistakes easy.

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