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Historical recipes for preparatory layers for oil paintings in manuals, manuscripts and handbooks in North West Europe, 1550-1900: analysis and reconstructions

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Appendix 11 Applications to the reverse of the support

Recipes are paraphrased, unless the text appears between quotation marks.

11a Applications to the reverse of panel supports

<i>source</i>		<i>materials employed as reverse side applications</i>	<i>goal</i>	<i>additional comments</i>
Beurs 1692: 17-20	NL	spike oil (x 3-4)	to be 'free of worms'	
De la Hire 1730: 708-9	FR	sizing layer: Warm leather glue (x 1) ground layer: chalk, glue (x several times)	applied to both sides to prevent deformation ('se tournent')	
<i>Nieuwen verlichter</i> 1777: 170	NL	sizing layer: warm leather, parchment or glove clippings glue ground layer: white chalk, glue (x several times)	to prevent 'turning'	after sizing, scrape size on which one will paint to even. Smooth every application on the side on which one will paint.
Dutens 1779: 62	FR	sizing layer: glove glue		
Jahn 1803: 48-50	GE	oil paint	against weather	
Fernbach 1834: 5-7	GE	sizing layer: 1 pound glue, 3 sizes water (x 2) ground layer: Mannheim chalk, warm glue (x 6-7)	to prevent deformation, worm damage. (It seals the panel from the air and worms require air to live.)	further down in the recipe a second ground layer is described, of which it is not clear whether it should also be applied to the back. It consists of a layer of lead white, Mannheim chalk, amber varnish, turpentine oil (x 3-4), and is applied over an isolation layer of warm glue water.
Sully 1873: 048	UK/ US	'poplar panels, when used at all, should be painted on the back and edges'		poplar is advised against, since it 'is apt to warp or split' and 'will shrink'.
Muckley 1882: 59-62	UK	reverse and edges: oil-paint, or a coat of wax and turpentine	to prevent 'paint peeling from the surface'.	
Ellis 1883: 146	UK	ground of white lead, both back and front.		
Vibert 1892: 96-8	UK	mastic and 'suitable protective varnish'.	preserve from causes of destruction.	
Vibert 1892: 184	UK	Reverse of the panel to be sized with a 'flooring' composed of equal parts of thick linseed oil and re-touching varnish without siccative, and, when this layer is dry, with another layer of picture varnish.	to preserve the panel from the attacks of dampness and worms	
Oughton, 1892: 36	UK	first sized, and painted with a good ground of flake white and a little bright red, rubbed down with fine sand-paper	if the wood is inclined to warp	
Standage 1892: 76-7, 79	UK	equal [=equal to the front] quantity of colour	in order to preserve them flat	

11b Applications to the reverse of canvas supports

<i>source</i>		<i>materials employed as reverse side applications</i>	<i>goal</i>	<i>additional comments</i>
Hallen 1761: 322		greasy waxy oils from the rinsing jar (applied by some, to front and back)	to keep moisture from the wall away from the paintings	
Montabert 1829: 136-8	FR	for simple paintings, not meant for posterity, an unlined canvas may be used, however it must be coated with wax at the back.		
Montabert 1829: 136-8	FR	only lined canvas should be admitted. Lining with glue or with wax.	impermeable to atmosphere	
Mérimée 1830: 249-50	FR	layer of white chalk with very little glue		recipe provided in relation to a recipe for a distemper ground bound in causeum.
Ursin and Hummel 1838: 261-2	DK	a single application of the ground colour		
Fielding 1839: 80	UK	[describing Titian's practice] soaked with bees' wax dissolved in oil	to prevent imbibing the moisture of the atmosphere of Venice; to prevent his colours 'from falling through the ground into the cloth, and to support the ground itself on the surface of the cloth'.	
Muckley 1882: 63-4	UK	coat of white lead	prevent damp from walls to go through the canvas to the colours in the front surface; protect canvas from gas used for lighting	
Collier 1886: 112	UK	whitewashed with a paste made by mixing starch with flake white in powder	[to prevent] suffering from foul air	
Church 1890: 28	UK	5% corrosive sublimate (mercuric chloride) dissolved in methylated spirit, applied once with a stiff varnish-brush. Once evaporated, white lead ground in starch paste is applied	the solution 'coagulates' some of the size in the canvas corrosive sublimate prevents the development of mould or mildew, and is a good preservative against the attack of animal organisms. prevents absorption of 'deleterious gases', such as 'sulphureted hydrogen'. Moisture may cause 'the colouring matter of the fiber and size of the canvas may move towards the front and discolour priming and picture'	reverse side application applied after the priming has been completed on the front.

<i>source</i>		<i>materials employed as reverse side applications</i>	<i>goal</i>	<i>additional comments</i>
Church 1890: 28	UK	tannin dissolved in methylated spirit, applied once with a stiff varnish-brush. Once evaporated, white lead ground in starch paste is applied.	the solution of tannin 'coagulates' some of the size in the canvas; the tannin turns it into leather. [prevents] absorption of 'deleterious gases', such as 'sulphureted hydrogen'. Moisture may cause 'the colouring matter of the fiber and size of the canvas may move towards the front and discolour priming and picture'.	reverse side application applied after the priming has been completed on the front.
Church 1890: 28	UK	'a double canvas'	[prevent] accidental injuries from mechanical causes.	
Scott Taylor 1890: 33	UK	white lead, ground in water, and mixed with starch paste [Scott Taylor quotes Church]	action of 'sulphur acids' and 'sulphureted hydrogen' in the atmosphere	
Standage 1892: 73-4	UK	zinc white in linseed oil or lead white, over which another coat of zinc white is laid.	to minimize injurious reactions	
Standage 1892: 73-4	UK	extra backing of canvas	against accidental damages	
Vibert 1892: 107-8	UK	[A number of materials can be used:] India rubber [=caoutchouc] dissolved in petroleum, wax and resin, gum lac, two coatings of water-colour fixative [not further specified]	so that excess of oil coming from the colours shall not go through the tissue, as that might burn it, and so that dampness shall not penetrate it, as that might cause it to rot.	applied after the front of the canvas has received a ground.
Vibert 1892: 108	UK	metallic can as on a light frame, attached by hinges behind the picture (so as to be easily opened at will).	preserve the picture from shocks, such as contact with flame	
Vibert 1892: 193	UK	wadded mattress (of mineral cotton in spun glass or a stuffing of asbestos, as they are both indestructible by fire or dampness, or cork or any similar body) behind the canvas, a sheet of cardboard (rendered waterproof) fixed on the frame by screws.	to prevent vibration of canvas or paper stretched for crayons	
<i>Technische Mitteilungen</i> nr 5 (1898): 3	GE	reverse side of the canvas brushed with elastic and very sticky lacquer (like the one used to varnish oil paintings), covered with a not strong layer of tin foil (pure tin).	weather and humid walls, insects, 'worms', etc.'sulphurous fumes' from the wall, salty fumes during sea transport.	

11c Applications to the reverse of paper supports

<i>source</i>		<i>materials employed as reverse side applications</i>	<i>goal</i>	<i>additional comments</i>
Kingston 1835: 5	UK	two or three coats of paint	to prevent [the paper] being affected by the air	

11d Applications to the reverse of board supports

<i>source</i>		<i>materials employed as reverse side applications</i>	<i>goal</i>	<i>additional comments</i>
Dietrich 1871: 20	GE	asphalt lacquer	against humidity	
'A relic of Old times 1833 P.01', 183?-1876: REP029L15	UK	'bottoms' of the size jar used for the reverse side of millboards		[not a full recipe, only a mention of the quality of size used for the reverse side.]
'A relic of Old times 1833 P.01', 183?-1876: REP032L16	UK	five coats on the back of 'single size'		[not a complete recipe, a description of what was used by a person identified as 'R'.]