

VARNISHING AN OIL PAINTING

I _ WHY VARNISH? _ Oil Paint is a very durable medium, if properly used, and varnish is not absolutely necessary.

- However, varnish protects the painting from dirt and dust.
- It can also provide an even gloss on the painting. Varnishes range from matte finish (not noticeably changing the appearance of the piece) to very glossy (giving the appearance of wet paint).
- The more glossy varnishes can enhance the optical effect of depth in the painting, by intensifying the transparency of glazes; they may also saturate the colors, making them more intense.

II _ WHEN TO VARNISH _

- I spray my paintings with “retouch varnish” before I send them out into the world --- a diluted product that provides a temporary protection against dirt and dust.
- If the fuller protection of a final varnish is desired, it should be applied later, after the oil paint has fully cured. According to Robert Gamblin of Gamblin Artists Colors Co., paintings made with natural resin should be allowed to dry for approximately six months before receiving their final varnish coat. Many sources advise that one year is a better time span, especially with thick paint application. There are painting mediums made with alkyd resins which dry sooner, and, according to Gamblin, can be varnished within three months.

III – IF YOU OWN ONE OF MY PAINTINGS and are not sure if it has been varnished, you can sometimes look on the back side and find a notation of Final Varnish (with a date). I try to keep good records of when my paintings have received a final coat of varnish, and if you are in doubt, please contact me. I will be happy to apply a coat of final varnish to any of my paintings that are ready for it, if you bring them to my studio. There is no charge for this service.