

Conservation/Technical Terms (including definitions from the Getty Art & Architecture Thesaurus © AAT)

Abraded/Abrasion: Rubbed or scuffed areas caused by a gradual loss of material on the surface due to rubbing, wearing, or scraping of an object or material against itself or another usually harder object or material. Abrasion may be a deliberate attempt to smooth, clean, or polish a surface. It may also be a deteriorative process that occurs over time as a result of weathering or handling.

Barytes/Barite: The most common barium mineral, barium sulphate (BaSO₄), occurring in hydrothermal ore veins containing lead and silver, in sedimentary rocks such as limestone, in clay deposits formed by the weathering of limestone, in marine deposits, and in cavities in igneous rock in Spain, Germany, and in the southern Appalachian, central states, and California in the United States. Ground barite is used as a body or filler for paper, cloth, and phonograph records, as a base for white pigment, and as an inert body in coloured paints.

Beva 371: A thermoplastic heat-seal adhesive designed by Gustav Berger for art conservators. Beva 371 was created for relining of paintings but is now also used as a consolidant for paintings, textiles, and leather.

Capriccio/Capricci: Compositions focusing on fanciful characters involved in pranks, capers, or other imaginary activities, or on buildings or architectural features grouped in arbitrary, imaginary arrangements or in a fantasy setting. Used especially with reference to 18th-century Italian paintings and prints.

Cartellino: A piece of parchment or paper painted illusionistically, often as though attached to a wall or parapet in a painting, commonly with the artist's name or that of a sitter.

Chine collé: A strengthening technique used in printing whereby a thin sheet of paper, originally China paper, is adhered to a heavier backing sheet and printed at the same time.

Cracklure/craquelure: A network of fine fracture lines in a coating layer, such as a ground, paint layer, varnish, or glaze.

Cusping: Wavy lines which can be seen at the edge of the canvas. They are caused by the tacks which are used to attach the canvas to the stretcher. Where there are tacks the canvas is pulled tight, and where there is a gap the canvas relaxes.

Dammar/Damar: Any of the resins obtained from various trees of the genera Shorea, Agathis, or Hopea, growing in the East Indies, New Guinea, and New Zealand. It is obtained by tapping trees or, more rarely, from fossilized specimens from the ground. The gum varies in colour from clear to pale yellow, while the fossilised form is grey-brown. Dammar is used as a glazing or clouding agent and as a picture varnish.

Drypoint: Intaglio print-making process in which a sharp needle scratches the plate creating a burr that yields a characteristically soft and velvety line in the final print.

Foxing: Pale, brownish, diffuse spots that appear on paper or other surfaces from mould or fungus growth, metallic impurities in the paper, or other conditions in combination with dampness.

GC-MS analysis: Gas chromatography–mass spectrometry uses the techniques of gas-chromatography and mass spectrometry in tandem to identify substances in complex mixtures within a test sample. In conservation, GC-MS is employed to determine the presence and type of organic compounds in paintings and other artifacts.

Gesso: A white priming or ground made of chalk, gypsum, burnt gypsum, zinc oxide, or whiting mixed with glue or occasionally casein. Used to prepare wooden panels or other supports for painting, gilding, or other decorative processes.

Glue paste: An old-fashioned glue which was made by boiling the skin of animals and then adding flour.

Glue-relined: The process of sticking a new piece of material on the back of a picture to make it stronger.

Ground : The first layer of paint on the canvas. It makes the surface smoother and it stops the upper layers of paint from soaking in. It is often a layer of white paint.

Impasto: Application of paint in thick, opaque masses, usually with a well-loaded brush or a palette knife.

Imprimatura: A coloured glaze, size, or wash applied on top of a white ground, to provide the initial tone for the design layer.

Infrared spectroscopy: An investigative technique concerned with the spectrum between the visible and the short-wavelength microwave. Infrared spectroscopy can detect the internal vibration of molecules.

IR image/imaging: An investigative technique used especially to detect under-drawing below a painting's surface, usually invisible to the naked eye.

Key/keys/keying out/keyed out: Paintings on canvas have a tendency to become slack on their stretchers. In certain circumstances, a procedure called **keying out** can be performed to tighten the canvas with expandable corner joints.

Maratta frame: A frame with a continuous ornament design, usually repeated foliage motifs, along the inner part of the moulding. This type of frame was popular in the 17th and 18th centuries and named after the Italian painter Carlo Maratta.

Marouflage: A method of mounting a flexible support such as paper or canvas onto a solid support such as a wall or panel, whether before painting or afterwards. The term may be extended to lining a painting with another canvas to strengthen it.

Mastic: A gum exudation of small evergreens native to the Mediterranean countries, soluble in both alcohol and turpentine; used for artists' paint and coating lacquer. By the 20th century, its use was superseded by dammar.

Mortice joint: A cavity or opening in wood or other material made to receive a corresponding component, or 'tenon', so as to form a joint.

Pendant: A painting designed as a pair to another.

Pentiment/Pentimento: The physical evidence of an artist's change of mind, apparent when areas of a painting that have been over-painted become visible. If an artist changes his mind and paints over something which he has already painted, it can sometimes become more obvious with time. This is because as oil paint gets older, the binder becomes more transparent.

Photomicrograph: A photograph taken through a microscope to increase the size of the image.

Platemark: Imprint of the edges of the plate on intaglio prints caused by pressure in the printing process.

Reagent: A soap which is used as a cleaning agent.

Reflectography: A digital imaging technique that allows the study of layers beneath the surface of a painting by capturing absorption/emission characteristics of reflected infrared

radiation. A complementary technique to x-radiography, reflectography uncovers different information. The longer wavelengths of infrared radiation penetrate most surface pigments and reveal charcoal or graphite under-drawings and thus the underlying initial stages of a composition.

Reserve: An area of a painting left plain, usually for the addition of a major feature such as a tree.

Selvedge: A self-finished edge of fabric.

SEM/SEM-EDX analysis: Scanning electron microscopy. The activity of using a scanning electron microscope, which is designed for directly studying the surfaces of solid objects, under magnification, by utilising a beam of focused electrons of relatively low energy.

Slub: A thick spot in a yarn created by varying the tightness of the twist.

Staffage: Small figures, animals, and other small details added to enliven a painting or drawing of a landscape or architectural composition.

Stump: Cigar-shaped implement often pointed at both ends, consisting of tightly rolled leather, paper, or felt; used in drawing to blend or smudge chalk, charcoal, soft pencil, pastel, or crayon.

Tabby weave: Canvas woven by a method based on a unit of two ends and two picks, in which each end passes over one and under one pick; the binding points are set over one end on successive picks.

Twill: A woven canvas characterised by parallel diagonal ridges or ribs, produced by passing the weft threads over one and under two or more threads of the warp, instead of over and under in regular succession, as in plain weaving.

UV Examination: The photographic technique of recording images using light from the ultraviolet (UV) segment of the electromagnetic spectrum. Objects are photographed from the reflection of UV radiation or its transmission through them. The technique is particularly effective in showing areas of damage or repaint in a painting.

Vection cracks: Cracks in the paint layers caused by minute movements in a canvas.

X-radiograph: An X-radiograph records the areas of a work where the X-rays have been impeded (these areas appear white when printed as a photographic positive). Pigments containing heavy metals such as lead and mercury show up, as do the nails used in the construction of a painting's support. X-radiographs are useful for revealing changes that may have occurred at different stages in the development of a painting; losses to the paint layer show as dark areas. X-radiographs can be difficult to interpret because the image shows all of the layers of the work superimposed.

X-ray fluorescence (XRF): Fluorescence stimulated by x-rays - when the emissions are examined by spectrometry, this can be useful in determining the chemical composition of a substance.