

The shelf life of artists' colours

We are often asked about the shelf life of our artists' grade colours. It is not always easy to answer this question, because shelf life varies from medium to medium, depending on the component ingredients of the particular type of colour and the various external factors specific to it. Often we come into possession of decades old artists' grade colours from bequests. These, we analyse and test in our laboratory, and it always amazes us, how these colours are still perfectly usable, even after being set aside and forgotten for such a long period of time!



In order to give you a point of reference, nonetheless, we shall quote the respective expected shelf life of each of our product ranges. This shelf life could actually be exceeded by a considerable length of time, with appropriate storage. The following overview is a rough guide for the ideal storage conditions for Schmincke artists' grade colours, additionally what you should keep in mind and the approximate shelf life involved. Each Schmincke item is furnished with a batch number to indicate the date of manufacture.

Pastels

Pastel sticks keep indefinitely in dry storage, as they are primarily comprised of pure pigments. Thus, pastels are certainly the longest lasting artists' grade colours with the longest shelf life.

Natural resin oil colours or oil colours

MUSSIN®, **Norma® Professional**, **AKADEMIE® Öl color**

Oil colours because of their content of oil or natural resin oil, can also last for a very long time in storage, while remaining perfectly usable, forfeiting none of their excellent working characteristics as paint.

It is important – and this applies to all other artists' grade colours – that all containers involved such as tubes, bottles, jars or pots are kept intact and closed airtight. In the course of using oil paints in large-volume containers with large openings, it is not unusual for the oil to separate and a skin to form on the surface, which are processes typical for medium. In this case, we advise you to carefully remove the excess oil and/or the skin before use. Our recommendation: to avoid renewed skinning, make sure to cover large oil colour surfaces carefully with a sheet of plastic. One more thing: after a number of years, it is possible for the drying time of oil paints in storage to become longer. In this event, we recommend that you test the paints in question before use, in the desired technique.

Water colour and gouache in tubes

HORADAM® AQUARELL and **HORADAM® GOUACHE**, **HKS® Designers' Gouache**, **Calligraphy Gouache** and **AKADEMIE® Gouache**

For paints in tubes, such as watercolours and gouache, namely water-based colours also called watermedia, shelf life is comparatively shorter. The expected shelf life is 5 years, although the colours are often useable for a longer period. In addition to this, dried out gouache and watercolours in tubes can be reactivated for use by diluting with water.

Watercolours in pans

HORADAM® AQUARELL and **AKADEMIE® Aquarell**

The shelf life of watercolours in pans is virtually indefinite, provided that proper care is taken with their storage: make sure that there is no trace of water left in the half pan and that the box is shut tight only after the cake of paint has dried thoroughly. Storage in a dry place at normal room temperature will also help.

Linoprint colours

aqua-Linoprint colours, **College® Linoprint colours**

What applies to gouache and watercolour paints in tubes also goes for water-based linoprint colours. Under proper storage conditions and careful handling, a shelf life of 5 years can be expected.



Acrylic colours

PRIMAcryl[®], AKADEMIE[®] Acryl color, College[®] and AERO COLOR[®] Professional

It is also with acrylic colours that shelf life is limited to approximately 5 years, owing to the fact that they are water based, and, more than ever, airtight storage at normal room temperature is essential. Unlike other watermedia, once acrylic colours dry out, they are no longer usable. In addition to this, it is absolutely imperative to safeguard acrylic colours from frost!

So, as you can see: the more carefully you handle your materials, the longer you will be able to enjoy them! Here are the main points, once more in brief: it is especially important when handling water based artists' grade colours and mediums, that containers are opened only for immediate use and the media taken from their containers using only clean and dry implements. In addition, keep in mind to close all containers properly, immediately after use. In the case of products which are not readily resolvable, such as oil and acrylic colours, it is moreover advisable to wipe the paint off the threaded neck and cap of the tube with a cloth before screwing it shut. This will prevent the cap from getting stuck to the neck later, with dried out paint.

Mediums

As far as the Schmincke mediums are concerned, shelf life depends primarily on the binding agent used in the product in question. Broadly speaking, it can be said that all **AQUA** and **LINO mediums** have a shelf life of at least 5 years under proper storage conditions and with careful handling, like all mediums for acrylic painting.

In contrast, the shelf life of non-aqueous, oil-based mediums, varnishes and fixatives is considerably longer.

As regards optimum storage conditions for all artists' grade colours and mediums at home and on the go, the general recommendation "store in a cool, dry place" applies.

Especially in the case of spray cans with varnishes and fixatives, it is imperative to keep them away from direct sunlight and protect them from temperatures above 50 °C, since these contain a liquid under pressure which may explode when heated.

The described product attributes and application examples have been tested in the Schmincke laboratory. The information is based on our current state of technical findings and experience. Due to the diversity of applications in terms of painting techniques, materials and working conditions, as well as numerous possible influences, this information is based on a general application range. A legally binding guarantee of specific attributes or the suitability for a specific usage purpose cannot be derived from our information; therefore the use of the products must be adapted to the users' individual conditions and tested in trials. For this reason, we cannot provide a warranty for product attributes and/or assume liability for damages that occur in connection with the use of our products.

By the way: Specifics for handling and product safety you will find on our website www.schmincke.de (e.g. download/safety data sheets).

For special questions please don't hesitate to ask our team in the lab! The best way to get in contact with them is via mail at: laborteam@schmincke.de.