

April 24, 2018



## The Gilding Arts Newsletter

An Educational Resource  
for Gold Leaf Gilding ~

### Some Thoughts on Gilded Glass...

The art of gilding glass, known in some realms as verre églomisé, in others reverse glass gilding, and to the signpainter simply as sign gilding, involves the application of genuine gold leaf in all its wide range of shades such as 16kt, 18kt Lemon, 22kt American and French Pale, 23k, and many others inbetween; also used are other precious and non-precious leaf such as white gold, silver, brass, and aluminum.

In the hands of the églomisé artist, the leaf is applied to the back of the glass which is then combined with painted imagery, often together with etching through the leaf and backed-up with colored paints. The beautiful contemporary work of Frances Federer in London and New York-based Miriam Elner come to mind.

Applying gold or other metal leaves to glass can be done with either an oil or water method (some may refer to the latter as 'water gilding' which should not be confused with traditional water gilding, a completely different method for burnished gilding of wood for picture frames, furniture and other wood or plaster elements). In either case,



the proper cleaning of the glass is important, most importantly with the water method which is an aqueous solution of gelatin dissolved in water.

At one time gelatin capsules were used in contemporary glass gilding when a brilliant lustre was desired. Today a food-grade gelatin sheet with perforated diamond shapes have taken the place of the capsules, eliminating the need to pay a visit to the pharmacist (truly!).

Gelatin size is prepared by adding specific proportions of gelatin to distilled water. It takes only a small amount of gelatin to adhere the leaf to the glass. What we look to achieve is the greatest brilliancy in the gild. Too much gelatin will cause the gild to cloud over. But a proper bond between the gold or silver leaf to the glass is important.

However, an *églomisé* mirror where the gilded glass will be hung in a frame will require less of this bond compared to gilded glass which will be installed directly to a wall. A signpainter on the other hand may desire a weaker bond so that surplus leaf surrounding the image created on the back of the gold can be wiped off readily once the paint has dried. Leaf that has been sized with a gelatin solution will tend to gain strength in the bond when left on the glass, a concern to the signpainter. With signpainting, it is good to remove the excess gold as quickly as possible to avoid chipping the surrounding paint although this requires a fast-drying paint which tends to be not as strong as slow-drying. As with most things, there's always a balance to achieve.

Another treatment approach to gilded glass is abrading the leaf where some of the leaf is removed which creates an *antiqued* 'look' when backed-up with black enamel. The strength of the size is important here as well; the size should be weak enough to allow for the leaf to rub-off in gentle patterns, revealing a subtle rub-through along with the appearance of almost spider web-like abrasions achieved mostly by the delicate strands of overlaps within the leaf that has dried upon the glass.

For those wishing to try, I have conducted a variety of tests to find that sweet-spot between a primarily cloud-free brilliancy in the leaf and what feels like a sufficiently strong bond between the leaf and the glass. For gold leaf I use 2 gelatin diamonds to 250 ml of distilled water. For heavier leaf such as genuine silver I make a slightly stronger solution, 2 diamonds gelatin to 200 ml distilled water. Make note that to prepare the solution, the gelatin is allowed to sit in a container of a small amount of this pre-measured water to soften and then heated in a hot water bath until dissolved. Then the remainder of the cold water is added to the size. Size should be used during approximately a three hour session. It will weaken over a short period of time so don't save it in the refrigerator to use the next day. I confess that I do this sometimes to simply have something on hand where small touchups can be made but it's always good practice to prepare a fresh batch when needed during the day.

During the glass gilding classes that I teach we explore other experimental territories such as smoking the back of the glass with a candle, locking it in with a hint of shellac and gilding over the intriguing patterns. We also add India Ink to the size under white gold and silver; and use Mixol Universal Tints combined with gelatin size and splashed over the gilded leaf which may be used on the front of the glass as well for use on such glass objects as vases, votives, and candleholders.

This water-based gelatin size can also be used to gild onto acrylic and I have found the bond can be equal to glass; however, any amount of scratches in the surface can be amplified when gilded. That said, the clarity of the gild on acrylic along with the bond can be quite good. Gelatin size can also be used to gild gold to metal as well with surprising durability in indoor circumstances.

As a final thought, we often consider what is known as the Bloom strength of glues used in traditional water gilding which can range from approximately 160gb to 500gb. Interestingly, although gelatin sheets

are also formulated according to Bloom strengths, of which there are four that I am aware of, the idea of this strength measurement hasn't seemed to enter the vocabulary yet for glass gilding/égloisé. Perhaps it may be associated with the switch between gelatin capsules and sheets. A topic we'll look at further in an upcoming issue!

For further information on glass gilding classes or for help with questions in this medium please feel free to continue to send your questions to [charles.studio@usa.net](mailto:charles.studio@usa.net).

Peace, health, and clarity,

Charles

***Seattle Gilding Classes Just Added for 2018!***



**Traditional  
Water Gilding  
Classes  
Seattle**

*May 17~19*

*Sept. 13~15, 2018*

CHARLES DOUGLAS  
GILDING STUDIO

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Gasworks Gallery

3815 4th Ave NE

10:30 am ~ 4:30 pm

Register:

[gildingstudio.com](http://gildingstudio.com)

*Just announced! Traditional Water Gilding classes in Seattle, WA: May 17-19 & Sept. 13-15, both perfect times to visit Seattle and the Pacific Northwest while we studiously attend to the making of gesso and clay bole, learn to handle and apply genuine 23 kt gold leaf, burnish and tone, and explore how to achieve brilliant layers of gold and the deeper tones of an aged appearance. Join us for three days in May or September across the street from beautiful Lake Union in the heart of Seattle. Classes are small (4) so good to register early!*

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Traditional Water Gilding  
Gilding Arts Newsletter Member Rate \$675  
General Website Rate \$750

Traditional Water Gilding ~ Register Now (May 17-19)

Traditional Water Gilding ~ Register Now (Sept. 13-15)



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OCTOBER 1 - 5  
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*Experience the excitement and be a part of this year's ArtFusion Event in Estes Park, Colorado! Whether you're a Fine artist working in oils on canvas, intrigued by the possibilities of gold and silver leaf within your work of art on paper, canvas, or panels or someone simply interested in learning*

*about what lies behind the mysteries of the ancient artform of gold leaf gilding. This is a great class to begin your journey or refine your techniques by studying with a gilder with 34 years of experience.*

*Learn to lay a gold ground for painting including genuine 22kt gold leaf, 12kt white gold, aluminum and pure silver leaf. Explore different methods for embellishment, applying clay bole and gold leaf to paper, all while learning to use the gilder's tools.*

*A Special thank you to [McCollum Interiors](#), Proud Sponsor of Gilding Materials and Mixol Tints for ArtFusion!*

*Join us this October 5th by registering at [www.artfusionevent.com](http://www.artfusionevent.com)*

Gold Leaf Gilding Classes  
Presented by  
Charles Douglas Gilding Studio  
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