

All Things Ampersand

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With a lot more wood panels being sold in the market, some that seem less expensive and some that have different properties than Ampersand panels, I thought it time to share a series of posts on painting on wood panels. In the upcoming months, I'll share interviews with conservators and researchers, painting companies and artists about working on panels as well as scientific research on the differences in types of panel. Please engage with us and let me know your questions so that we can guide you to finding the best surface for your art.



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[oxLZWojPINK/UXBHQnMBeal/AAAAAAAAABKs/gEU3if2iT_U/s1600/Hardbord_all_profiles.jpg](https://i1.wp.com/4.bp.blogspot.com/-oxLZWojPINK/UXBHQnMBeal/AAAAAAAAABKs/gEU3if2iT_U/s1600/Hardbord_all_profiles.jpg))

We often get questions about the archival properties of painting on Masonite. To begin, the word "Masonite" is a brand name for "hardboard". It has been commonly known as "masonite" after the founder of the Masonite Corporation, William Mason invented this wood product in 1924. These tempered hardboards in the 40's and 50's made conservators leery of paintings done on these now outdated hardboards due to the adhesion problems caused by the excessive oil on the surface. However, over 20 years ago, the high cost of tung and linseed oil forced U.S. manufacturers to change the way they manufacture hardboard. Today's U.S. hardboard is no longer made by immersing panels in oil. Instead, a tiny amount (less than .02 per sq ft) of oil (normally linseed) is applied with a roll coater and then baked and pressed at high temperatures. Most of this oil is flashed off when the boards are baked. This oil "tempering" is invisible and does not leave an oil residue on the panel that can cause adhesion problems, as did the outdated hardboard. The purpose of this process is to make the board stronger and less prone to warping.

Mark Gottsegen, in his book, *A Manual of Painting Materials and Painting Techniques*, writes that both tempered and untempered hardboard can be used successfully for painting. However, when artists call Ampersand we always recommend using tempered hardboard because it will resist warping and the edges won't fray as they sometimes do with

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untempered or standard hardboard. Furthermore, tempered hardboard creates a better seal with oil and acrylic primers so that the painted surface is protected from any potential discoloration.

[. \(https://ampersandart.com/products/images/cradle_beauty2.jpg\)](https://ampersandart.com/products/images/cradle_beauty2.jpg)

Ampersand uses a tempered hardboard as the base for its Museum panels. After extensive research and testing, we chose hardboard that is made through the Wet/Dry method. The Wet/Dry process method removes the lamella that contains many of the lignins and tannins that can cause discoloration in a painting over time. Through the use of water, this process leaches out many of water-soluble chemicals and acids that exist in the wood, leaving a more inert surface than a solid wood panel. No additional additives are necessary in this process because the natural wood fibers are used for binding, resulting in a stronger, more uniform, and denser board. The Ampersand **Hardbord™** (<https://ampersandart.com/hardbord.html>) is primarily manufactured from Aspen trees that have more uniform fibers and have more of a neutral pH than that of other woods.

Lastly, our hardboard supplier does not use urea-formaldehyde glue in the manufacturing process. They rely on the natural lignin in wood for the bonding of the wood fibers, making our board environmentally sound.

Before closing

I should note that often MDF is sometimes referred to as Masonite or hardboard in lumber yards or even in art supply stores. Artists should ask if the panel is a true

hardboard and not an MDF. Today there are very few true hardboard suppliers as the trend has shifted to MDF (medium density fiber) panels that are less expensive to produce. However, the densities you can achieve in the hardboard process are difficult to achieve in MDF manufacturing without going to thicker heavier panels. You will often see fiber raising and high levels of porosity in MDF's.

All wood surfaces should be sealed with a good primer before gessoing or painting on them.

For more detailed and technical (believe it or not) information on hardboard and **Hardbord** (<https://ampersandart.com/hardbord.html>)™ (<https://ampersandart.com/hardbord.html>), please refer to our website: ampersandart.com/tips/archivalinfo (<https://ampersandart.com/tips/archivalinfo.html>)

All things Ampersand,
Karyn Meyer-Berthel
Artist & Social Media Specialist
Ampersand Art Supply

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(<https://ampersandart.com/blog/2013/04/painting-on-panel-sizing/>)
June 28, 2013
In "GAC 100"

4 comments on “Painting on Panel: Working with Masonite”

1. *Unknown* (<https://www.blogger.com/profile/07256243470832421195>) says:

May 7, 2013 at 9:39 am (<https://ampersandart.com/blog/2013/04/painting-on-panel-working-with-masonite/#comment-102>)

It is really frustrating to click on the Spring Sale where it even describes the medium canvas used on the boards and then be directed to a map and megastores, etc. with NO information about the particular boards "on sale"!

Reply

2. *Susan* (<https://www.blogger.com/profile/12666735270675787643>) says:

May 7, 2013 at 10:21 am (<https://ampersandart.com/blog/2013/04/painting-on-panel-working-with-masonite/#comment-101>)

Glad I found this site. I have recently changed my painting technique to work on aquaboard. I use ink and watercolor and make unusual jungle like landscapes. I varnish the work when finished. I find the aquaboard does not reflect the light as nicely as watercolor paper. I look forward to learning some tips on how to translate the paint to board to get the quality I want.

Reply

3. *Karyn Meyer-Berthel* (<https://www.blogger.com/profile/05303306929357739439>) says:

May 7, 2013 at 3:27 pm (<https://ampersandart.com/blog/2013/04/painting-on-panel-working-with-masonite/#comment-100>)

I hear you. The boards on sale for the spring are Aquabord, Pastelbord and Scratchbord as well as The Artist Panel, canvas texture. The retailers that offer the sale are listed, but retailers might differ somewhat in the percentage off. I will see what we can do to rectify the page listing the dealers.

Reply

4. *Karyn Meyer-Berthel* (<https://www.blogger.com/profile/05303306929357739439>) says:

May 7, 2013 at 3:28 pm (<https://ampersandart.com/blog/2013/04/painting-on-panel-working-with-masonite/#comment-99>)

Thanks for writing, Susan. Yes, the Aquabord is a little different than paper. There are several posts in the blog on working with Aquabord, as well as several fabulous artists using it who can offer advice and input. I will certainly be writing more about it this year, too. You can click on the Aquabord link on the right to find more posts on this panel in particular.

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