Studio Safety

Artists often use the same materials that chemists use in their lab - the same acids, solvents, metals, pigments, dyes, etc. It’s the same chemical, but the handling is often entirely different because there is too often the perception that art materials are not chemicals.

However, just like many other art materials, varnishes and fixatives are chemicals, and because artists use these products repeatedly, it’s even more important to follow all directions and safety precautions.

Know your materials - Read the label!!
Labels on spray varnishes and fixatives should provide good directions for use, information on product handling, storage and disposal, and clean up; how to minimize your personal exposure to the chemicals; what to do if first aid is needed; a number to call for additional information and more. Responsible companies will provide you with a great deal of information so that you can take appropriate precautions. If you aren’t getting all the answers you need on the label, ask the manufacturer or request the Material Safety Data Sheet for the products you use regularly. Many manufacturers provide links to MSDS’s on their web sites. Material Safety Data Sheets are focused on the industrial user but they do provide helpful information beyond what’s on the product label.

Minimize exposure.
Take proper precautions to reduce inhalation and skin contact. Wearing old clothes that cover arms and legs, like a long coat or coveralls, are a good choice for protecting yourself, and be sure to wash them on a regular basis. Protective safety glasses, disposable plastic gloves, and a NIOSH-approved respirator all help to protect your eyes, skin and lungs. If you have any cuts or abrasions, make sure they are covered. If you have any exposed skin, use a barrier cream, which should be applied about 30 minutes before starting work. When finished, wash your hands and any exposed skin thoroughly with soap and water. Do not use solvent to clean your hands. Just like during the use of other art materials, don’t eat or drink in the area, and always keep all art materials safely out of the reach of children and pets.

Ventilate, ventilate, ventilate.
Vapors are harmful, so avoid breathing the spray mist. Spray outside whenever possible. If it is necessary to spray indoors, try to spray in an area separate from your studio. Ensure there is good ventilation. Open windows and doors or, even better, use a spray booth or ventilation system that vents to the outside to ensure fresh air entry during application and drying. Artograph (www.artograph.com) makes affordable spray booths with built in exhaust adapters for spraying works of art up to 15” x 30” that can be vented to the outdoors by attaching a standard 4” dryer hose. However, for larger works of art, you should consider a larger ventilation system or plan to spray those outdoors. As mentioned before, while spraying, wear NIOSH approved respiratory protection.
Studio Safety (continued)

Stay out of the heat and away from fire. Keep away from heat, sparks and open flame. Don’t smoke. Extinguish all flames, pilot lights and heaters. Turn off stoves, electric tools and appliances, and any other sources of ignition. Avoid prolonged exposure to sunlight or heat from radiators, stoves, hot water and other hot items that may cause bursting.

Store & dispose of cans properly
Store aerosol cans away from heat sources with the caps on, out of reach of children and pets. Don’t puncture, incinerate or burn aerosol cans – this includes all spray varnishes, fixatives, adhesives, paints, etc. Don’t discard cans in a trash compactor. But do recycle them when empty. If steel recycling is not available in your area, dispose of empty cans in the trash (be sure they are completely empty and all product has been exhausted from the cans).

For information on Krylon® artist products, visit krylon.com/galleryseries.