

**Please be advised that in an effort to maintain our non-toxic environment, the Woodstock School of Art does not permit the use of turpentine or mineral spirits. Additionally, please refrain from wearing perfume, cologne or scents of any kind.**

*In general, solvents are one of the most underrated hazards in art. They are used for a million purposes: to dissolve and mix with oils, resins, varnishes, inks; to remove paint, varnish, lacquers; to clean brushes, tools, silk screens and even hands. As a result, artists are continually being exposed to solvents.*

*Almost all organic solvents are poisonous if swallowed or inhaled in sufficient quantity, and most cause dermatitis after sufficient skin contact. High concentrations of most solvents can cause narcosis (dizziness, nausea, fatigue, loss of coordination, coma, and the like). This can increase the chances for mistakes and accidents. As mentioned earlier, long-term exposure to high concentrations of many solvents can cause brain damage.*

by Michael McCann, PhD, CIH

*Danger! Aspiration hazard. Combustible. Harmful or fatal if swallowed. Harmful by breathing vapors. Exposure may result in naseau, headache, confusion, instability or in irritation of the eyes or chest.*

from the text on a container of Weber Odorless Turpenoid

*High concentrations of vapor or mist may cause nausea, vomiting, headaches, dizziness, loss of coordination, numbness, and other central nervous system effects. Massive acute overexposure may cause rapid central nervous system depression, sudden collapse, coma, and/or death.*

from ODORLESS MINERAL SPIRITS MATERIAL SAFETY DATA SHEET, MSDS Form No. 82739

*Mineral spirits definition-a petroleum distillate that is used especially as a paint or varnish thinner.*

from Merriam-Webster

Most oil painters are familiar with turpentine. We know the "piney" odor. It is a smell I closely associate with my time in art school. Many painters became aware of the toxicity of turpentine and switched to mineral spirits which frequently are odorless. There is a common misconception that if you can't detect an odor then it can't hurt you. This is patently false. Read the label. If you see the words "contains petroleum distillates" (or any variation thereof) stay away.

Mineral spirits, also known as white spirit, mineral turpentine, turpentine substitute, petroleum distillates, solvent naphtha (petroleum), varsol, Stoddard solvent, or, generically, "paint thinner", are clearly highly toxic. Commercial names used in the fine art material industry are Weber Odorless Turpenoid, Gamblin Gamsol Odorless Mineral Spirits, Sunnyside Odorless Paint Thinner, not to mention that virtually every manufacturer of oil paint offers their own version, i.e.-Winsor & Newton Artists' White Spirit. Additionally, most manufacturers of oil paint offer prepared painting mediums containing mineral spirits, i.e.-Old Holland Oil Painting Medium as well as the very popular Winsor & Newton Liquin Mediums. Interestingly, the MSDS on Liquin states "Suspected of causing cancer."

The School allows the use of **Oil of Spike Lavender** which is offered by several different manufacturers. It has been in use for centuries (Leonardo is thought to have used it) and minimal quantities are required for its usage. It may be used both as a solvent and as a medium. Some research into this product is recommended for those considering its usage. Chelsea Classical Studio Citrus Essence Brush Cleaner is a good non-toxic solvent. It is not meant to thin paint.

Lastly, many popular fragrances contain, among many things, petroleum distillate and should be avoided.



PO Box 338 Woodstock NY 12498

845. 679. 2388

[www.woodstockschoolofart.org](http://www.woodstockschoolofart.org)