

## Gesso

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Gesso is a thick, white acrylic which is often used for texturing surfaces on models.

In the non-theater world, gesso is most often used to prepare a canvas for painting, with a smooth finish. This material dries to a matte finish. After partially drying, the surface can be etched with a sharp object for low relief, but precise texture. There are two brands of gesso that bear mentioning for theatrical purposes: Liquitex and Utrecht. Liquitex Gesso

Liquitex can be found in just about any craft section. Many store-brand gessos are similar to this one. It is "pre-thinned" as far as canvas painting is concerned. That means it's a bit watered down, and great if your goal is a smooth, paintable surface, or subtle texture. Liquitex is great for applying on surfaces like foam, where paint doesn't like to stick. Then, a more complicated paint treatment can be applied over the top. When using foam core, the down and dirty way to help the edges feel finished involves applying a coat of this. (The better way is cutting posterboard, or something similar, to fit and gluing it on. Liquitex Gesso comes in a few colors nowadays, including Burnt Umber and Clear. Utrecht Gesso

This brand of gesso can also come "pre-thinned," so read labels. It generally comes in a thicker texture that is perfect for more textured model surfaces, like plaster, stone walls, and crumbling brick. It is actually the store-brand for Utrecht Art Supplies .

This thicker version is halfway between pre-thinned and modeling paste in texture. It can be manipulated while wet to get many different effects, but when partially dry, it can also be etched. For example, to make brick texture, apply a coat of this that is somewhat even, but contains mild texture. (A stippling sponge like the kind used in makeup class is helpful for this.) Then, when it is a little dry, take the very edge of your metal ruler or something long, straight and very thin and press where the mortar lines ought to be the long way. Then to divide into individual bricks using a pin or dead ball point pen to make the vertical mortar lines.

It can also help smooth over a rough spot on a piece by applying to the rough spot, and smoothing the surface with a damp paintbrush.