

# reflections

**Adding metallic  
and gold foil  
to your painting**  
by Louise Cadillac

If you're a painter who likes to experiment with or occasionally try new materials, you'll have loads of fun with reflective materials, such as gold leaf and metallic foils. You'll find that working with them

will stretch your ideas as well as your technique. You'll be inspired to explore new directions and concepts in your work. And you'll be excited about the results!



*In my painting "Madonna Fragments" I have used three different reflective materials. At the top of the painting I used faux gold leaf. For the archway in the upper right quadrant I brushed liquid gold onto tissue paper and then applied it as a collage. For the calligraphic lines in the bottom portion of the painting, I used metallic gold crayon. To prevent these areas from tarnishing, I covered them with a thin coat of acrylic medium.*

## Getting started

### Transfer Foil

If your local art store has a graphics department, ask them for some sheets of **COPY FX** by **Letraset**. It's a transfer foil used with laser printers. Simply, it's sheets of cellophane coated on the underside with metallic material. It's available in gold,

silver, copper, and several other metallic colors. If you don't have an art supply store in your area, call 1-800-A-PAPERS for their catalog. PAPERS has a large selection of foil materials in a variety of colors and textures.

## Applying metallic foil

Cut a piece of the metallic paper the size and shape of the area you wish to cover. To apply it to your painting, brush the underside (the gray side) with a coat of acrylic medium. Position the metallic piece on your painting with the metallic, shiny side up! Allow it to dry. When you think it is thoroughly dry, use your fingernail or a knife point to pry up a corner of the cellophane. If the cellophane comes away clear, you can then pull the rest of it away in one swipe. Voila! You have bright, gold

reflecting lights. You will find that you can glaze over the metallic areas with acrylic paint. A phthalo green glaze will give you a golden, "underwater" look. To achieve a rich, warm, red-gold, you can use acra-violet. These are just two possibilities. As you experiment, you'll find one idea leads to another, and you'll soon develop your own repertoire of unique techniques with reflecting materials.

## A note of warning

I would issue just two caveats: One, that the reflecting materials can be so beguiling that you may run the risk of misusing them. Your work can end up looking corny or too decorative. In other words, you may be tempted to use reflecting materials not for some expressive purpose, but for their own sake. However, if decorative art is your intent, that's fine. Artists working in a decorative field, or in folk art or in graphic or commercial art, make very effective use of reflecting materials.

As a fine artist, you should first experiment with the exciting effects you can achieve with the reflecting foils and paints and then employ them for some specific expressive purpose. As with any element you use in your composition, the metallic surfaces are subject to the basic design principles. They should become an integral part of your painting's design. They should contribute to the content of your piece.

My second caveat: Because the color and value of reflecting surfaces is effected by the angle from which they are lit or viewed, their effect in a composition is difficult to judge. This is an inherent problem with metallic surfaces that each artist must overcome. The same problem exists when photographing metallic surfaces. Although difficult, it can be done. Some experimentation with lights and angles will bring satisfactory results. Or you might want to leave the job to a professional photographer.



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