

Care of picture frames & gilded objects:

Making and applying Gesso

The making of Gesso follows on from the Rabbit Skin Glue (RSG) fact sheet. It is a tricky skill to master and its application is affected by the room temperature and humidity.

You require a kitchen stove or laboratory hot plate, and a bain-marie. This is just one process in the making of a gilt frame.

Making Gesso:

- Create the rabbit skin glue (RSG) as above
- Re heat the RSG, once the rabbit skin glue is warm and in liquid form, take off the heat and mix in the calcium carbonate (chalk) slowly – looking for a consistency of single cream and no bubbles. (note there is no measurements, but start with around 50ml of RSG and add the whiting until you get a single cream consistency.
- Note that if applying to timber frames the timber should be sized with at least one coat of RSG, and allowed to dry before applying Gesso.
- Paint the gesso on in layers. Don't go over the gesso when wet as you'll remove what you've just put on and don't let it go dry either. Add a new layer when the previous layer of Gesso is just damp to the touch. If you get this wrong, then the gesso will delaminate!
- Keep the gesso warm (in the Bain-Marie pan) between layers but you don't need to keep it on the heat.
- You need to do at least 7 coats to create a thick layer.
- The gesso does not keep and any leftover will have to be discarded.
- Sand back to remove any lines and imperfections and eventually use a 6000 grade paper for a 'glass smooth' finish.
- The frame is now ready for the application of Bole clay.

For more information or if you would like to attend a course contact:

Insitju@gmail.com

Insitju Framing and Conservation Ltd offer a range of long and short courses that can be group booked or one to one.