

# Lefranc recommendations for gilding

## Water or bole gilding:

Gilding is an art that requires dexterity, savoir-faire and skill, qualities that craftsmen obtain after years of experience.

This technique uses an expensive material: gold leaf.

Gilding involves two specific stages:

- Preparing the support
- Laying the gold leaf

When using a gilding bole, you need to prepare the surface before the gold leaf is applied. Wood is generally used because it has a stable shape: sizing and several layers of Meudon white mixed with hide glue are applied to the support.

There are two different stages to preparing hide glue:

- Hide glue is usually available in a block or in grain form (either rabbit or bovine skin). You need to soak the hide glue first. Add water until it reaches the level of the glue. Leave to soak for 24 hours, until it is completely soft.
- Remove from the water, drain and melt in a bain-marie, without boiling, stirring continuously. When the glue has melted, remove from the heat.
  - 1 part of glue for 7 parts of water

When melted, add the hide glue to Meudon white. Reheat the mixture in a bain-marie when it cools. Apply the mixture to the surface. Between each layer, you need to sand the surface until smooth. This primer is the base onto which you brush the gilding bole. The bole is a paste that comes in different colours: yellow, red and black. Mix this bole with twice its volume in warm hide glue. You'll need two layers of bole.

Once the bole is dry, wipe the surface with a cloth to remove dust. Use a squirrel hair brush to moisten all the surfaces on which the bole was applied: if water drips are slightly coloured, bole adherence is correct. Apply the gold leaves to the moist bole and leave to dry. Burnish the surface with agate.

Burnishing involves rubbing with agate stone in the shape of the surface, by pressing relatively hard to inlay the gold sheet into the bole. There are different shaped agates to suit different contours and motifs for reliefs and sculptures.

Gilding is complete. Objects will retain their sheen for many years.

## Gilding mixture or oil gilding:

Gilding using an oil gilding mixture is very different from bole gilding. This gilding technique is used to apply gold leaf to metals. The mixture used depends on the extent of the work to be carried out, climatic conditions and place of use. These mixtures can resist a temperature of up to  $-5^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Contrary to popular belief, oil gilding is faster and easier than bole gilding.

## LEFRANC 12-hour gilding mixture:

This mixture is suitable for large surfaces, outdoor work, in dry conditions and where there is not too much dust. To obtain the best results in terms of brilliance and depth, the 12-hour gilding mixture should be used rather than the 3-hour mixture. It will also be resistant for longer (stronger pictorial film).

## LEFRANC 3-hour gilding mixture:

This mixture is suitable on smaller surfaces for inside work or when the 12-hour mixture may not be used for whatever reason (wet climate or too much dust). Never burnish gold leaves applied with a gilding mixture. The pictorial film is still soft and the burnisher may rip the gold leaf.

## Water-soluble gilding mixture:

This mixture is a quick and simple gilding method. It is suitable for indoor work, on wood or plaster. The gold leaf may be applied 30 minutes after the mixture.