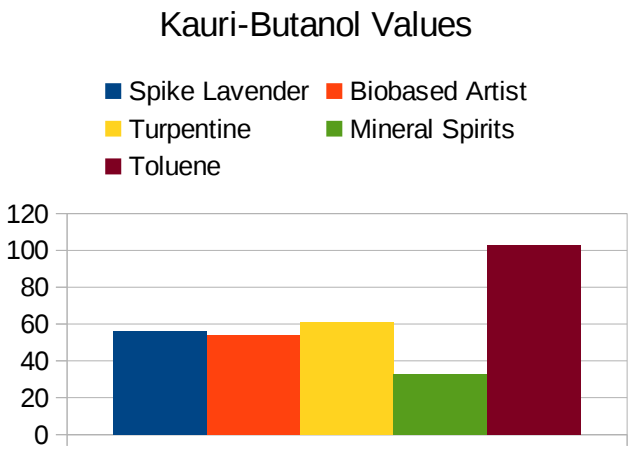
What Makes a Great Artist Thinner?

Low Toxicity

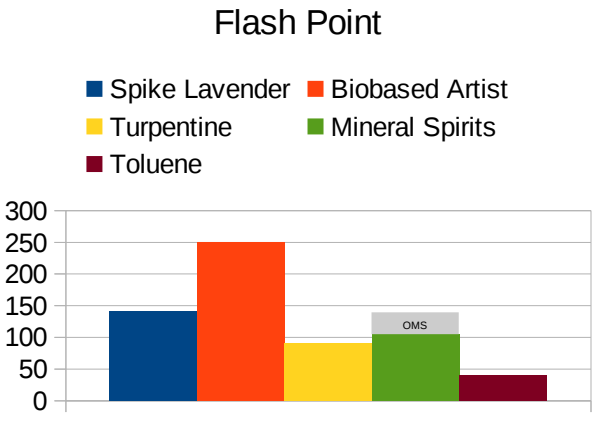
Since artists are exposed to their materials for extended periods of time, the issue of toxicity is always a concern. Mineral Spirits, or OMS – odorless mineral spirits, was used for some time as a substitute for the more toxic turpentine. However, both of these thinners require very limited exposure. Toluene, which is used in many paint thinners and brush cleaners, is equally bad or worse as far as toxicity. In contrast, Oil of Spike Lavender and Biobased Artist Thinner are both much safer choices for the artist. Oil of Spike Lavender, from the lavender fields in France, is listed by the FDA as (GRAS) "Generally Recognized as Safe", has been tested by a licensed toxicologits, and has a long history of use in painting. Biobased Artist Thinner is made from sustainable plant-based materials, is not listed by OSHA for limiting exposure, has no endocrine disrupters, or reproductive toxins, and is less irritating to the skin than a 4% aqueous soap solution.

Good Dissolving Power



In order to be used in art, a thinner must at least have basic qualities of solvency. If the thinner cannot dissolve certain elements of the paint, the result will be highly questionable, resulting in poor dispersion, clumping, color variance, and de-lamination. In order to measure the solubility of a thinner, the KB (Kauri-Butanol) value, or solvency, of the thinner is measured. The KB value measures the amount of thinner that can be added to kauri resin in butyl alcohol without causing cloudiness. Stronger solvents can be added in greater amounts than weaker solvents. In artistic painting, resins such as copal and damar are common, but cannot be dissolved with Mineral Spirits (or OMS). Mineral Spirits has a very low KB value. In contrast, because of their dissolving capacity, Oil of Spike Lavender and Biobased Artist Thinner will work much better with both the pigment and the various medium ingredients such as the resins commonly used in artistic oil painting.

High Flash Point



The flash point of a thinner refers to the lowest temperature where vapors of a material will ignite, if given an ignition source such as a flame. This relates to the question of safety and also has significance for shipping by air. The IATA considers a flash point above 140°F acceptable for shipping by air. Oil of Spike Lavender from France has a flash point of 141.6°F, while some other forms of spike lavender may have a slightly lower flash point. Biobased Artist Thinner has an extremely high flash point, over 250°F. However, turpentine, regular mineral spirits, and toluene all have significantly lower flash points. Some OMS products may be chemically modified to raise their flash points. Lower flash point solvents are flammable and therefore less safe.

Sustainability

In general, artist materials that are sustainable and renewable are more beneficial to the economic, social and environmental concerns of our times. Renewable and sustainable materials also help to promote local businesses and independent initiatives. One example is the lavender oil production in France, which follows models from centuries of tradition, enhanced with new technologies and research. Another example is the use of soy materials in a wide range of biobased products. Everything from shoes to automobile parts can now be made with these renewable materials. The Biobased Artist Thinner is just one of many new and innovative products made possible by advancements in sustainability research. In contrast, petroleum-based products such as mineral spirits, toluene, and petroleum-extracted turpentine solvents have received increased reservations in both public concerns about health, and safety, as well as legislation globally. Even in the US, some states such as California have begin to implement legislation requiring labeling of products that they consider carcinogenic. Many biobased renewable products have been a continuing part of civilization and passed the test in terms of health and sustainability.

Compatibility

In creating art with oil paints, artists often use a wide range of materials, integrating them as necessary to create individualized, unique and creative expressions. Artist may incorporate everything from Canada Balsam to Beeswax in the making of a painting. With this in mind, there is good reason to consider compatibility as a key factor in the decision to use a thinner. As discussed above, Mineral Spirits and OMS are generally the least compatible of solvents due to their low KB rating, weak solvency. The use of mineral spirits mandates that if a resin is used it must be an alkyd resin rather than a historical or natural resin. The alkyd must be designed to work with a weak solvent. In contrast, Oil of Spike Lavender and Biobased Artist Thinner work well in paint with all resins, including natural resins and alkyds. Of course turpentine and toluene also are strong solvents, but with an element of higher toxicity.

In sum, both Oil of Spike Lavender and Biobased Artist Thinner make great thinners for the artist because of…….

- Low Toxicity
- High compatibility
- Agriculture-based sustainability
- Safety due to high flash points
- Great Dissolving power