

Little Bits

Suggested materials and techniques

This is by no means an exhaustive list, just a few things we've discovered when painting our own "Little Bits."

Preparation:

The objects are metal, coated with a heavy, enamel-style paint. Be prepared to clean, sand, and possibly prime your object before painting. Sanding helps any new paint adhere, so it will be less likely to chip off after it dries. We like a medium-tooth sandpaper.

Primers may be needed if you are painting over a dark object with lighter colors. Look for primers designed for painting on metal; they should be available in both spray and brush on varieties.

Bring sufficient drop cloths, cardboard and/or newspaper to protect the surrounding area from any drips or overspray. Tape is also helpful, to hold your coverings together, and to cover small areas.

Paints:

There are also spray paints made for metal, and are good for broad coverage. For detailed areas, however, you may need to make templates to spray through, or make a puddle of the spray and paint it on with a brush. If you need a lot of colors, spray paint can get a bit pricey.

We've discovered something simply called Multi Surface Paint; 99 cents a bottle at Wal-Mart, in the arts and crafts section. Some of the reds and yellows require an extra coat, but otherwise it covers well; comes in a wide variety of colors; is water-based but dries to an enamel finish; and is inexpensive. It does better when varnished.

One artist has had success using artist acrylics, but the surface definitely needs to be primed first and varnished afterwards.

Finishing:

Check the specifications on your chosen medium to see whether they suggest a final varnish or not. Even if it's not called for, you may want to consider it anyway as extra protection for your work. Both spray and brush on varnishes are available; the first is easier to apply, the latter is safer to use and provides better coverage. Most require multiple coats.

Also check to see what climate conditions are acceptable to work in. Some paints and varnishes need to be used within a certain temperature and/or humidity range. It will say on the label.

Hardware stores are a good sources of most of these supplies, as they tend to have more "industrial" types of paint.