



# THE GOLD-VAULT



**Thank you for taking an interest in this Book Arts E-book.**

**Other e-books and manuals on the subject of the Book Arts and Gilding are available for free download from the Eden Workshops website.**

**<http://www.edenworkshops.com>**

**If you are interested in gilding in particular please do check out our website at:**

**<http://www.gold-vault.com>**

**For nearly 20 years my wife Margaret & I ran a system of craft workshops devoted to the exploration of the Book Arts.**

**During that time we worked in almost total isolation and seclusion in the grounds of a very private monastery in rural England. We developed four book related skills; hand book binding, paper marbling and book edge marbling, printing & box making and took those skills to high levels of excellence.**

**In 1997 after nearly 20 years running the Eden Workshops we were voted a National Living Treasure by Country Life magazine for our contribution to the Book Arts.**



**In 2004 we decided to close our workshops and move out here to Southern France, I now concern myself with teaching and have the time to concentrate on aspects of the book arts that interest me.**

**I can be contacted via email. Richard Norman [edenworkshops@orange.fr](mailto:edenworkshops@orange.fr)**

**Or by telephone, from the UK 0033 (0) 555 712142**

**To make this manual easier to consult I have colour coded each relevant section.**

**The text for the basic instruction manual is written in black.**

**The text for the recipes section is written in green.**

**The text for the instructions which are intended for use with the kits I supply is written in red.**

## How to Achieve Antique and other Distressed Finishes to Composition Gold Leaf.

Richard Norman 2006

If you have purchased any of the gilding kits from our web site you will find instructions for their use at the end of this manual, unless experienced I advise you to read through the manual before attempting to mix and apply the ingredients so as to get a feel for what we are doing here.

This manual should take all the mystery out of using gold leaf and how to achieve a number of antique finishes, *but please do note that all recipes pertain only to materials purchased from my web site, these recipes may or may not work with different materials, this is the truth, materials can vary greatly, for example no two gesso powders have been the same in my experience.*

**All of the materials and what little equipment you need are available from the [www.gold-vault.com](http://www.gold-vault.com) website, there are also kits available which will enable you to achieve all the finishes listed here.**

Right at the start let me say that I no longer use genuine gold leaf except when the customer asks for it, the job really demands it, or I simply want to use it.

I suppose now I use composition gold leaf about 90% of the time, I have found ways to make this cheap and versatile material look just the same as genuine gold leaf. Here is an example of what I mean.



Can you tell the difference?

Both pieces of work have had a crackle glaze and an antique glaze applied to them.

Ok, let us start by seeing what equipment you need to gild successfully.

### Equipment & Materials.



First off you will need a “**Gilders Cushion**” this is a must as this is the surface you will handle your gold on. The surface of the cushion is made from a piece of sheepskin with the grain reversed that is to say with the suede side showing. You can make your own cushion quite easily, or buy one, it’s up to you.

This cushion should never be handled with your fingers if you can help it; the idea is that this surface should remain completely free from any grease whatsoever.



Next is a “**Gilders Knife**”, you can use a regular dinner knife, but make very sure that the edge is not sharp or it will cut through the sheepskin cushion, you want a slightly **rough** edge to the blade not sharp.

To give you some idea of the edge it should have, bear in mind that gilders in ages gone by used to sharpen their knives on the kitchen step, so do remember this if you plan on using a knife of your own. The knives I supply will last several lifetimes; they are Sheffield steel with genuine bone handles.



You will need some fine grade “**Pumice Powder**”. This is used to de-grease the cushion prior to using the gold leaf. A material called Bath Brick used to be used for this job, but this is almost impossible to find nowadays, and pumice does a first rate job anyway.



You will need some form of “**Size**”; this is the adhesive which you paint onto your work in order to get the gold to stick to it. Many people use an oil based size, this is fine but it takes a long time to dry. Water based sizes are also available and I have heard good things said about them. I make my own size from Shellac, this dries much quicker than oil and has the advantage that it can also be used to seal the work after gilding, you have to mix the shellac with methylated spirit or any 90 proof industrial alcohol. Recipes are at the end of this manual



Traditionally a coloured “**Ground**” is applied to the surface of the piece to be gilded if made of wood or some other porous surface. Armenian Bole is still used for this purpose, I use a simple red ochre pigment, this is mixed with water and brushed on, I give all the recipes at the end of this manual. If you are gilding a non porous material such as glass or metal you can mix a little of the ground with shellac.



You will need “**Composition Gold leaf**”. You can of course use genuine gold leaf, the equipment and processes used will remain the same, but these methods of antiquing are very effective.

I use composition gold leaf because it is cheap and I cannot tell the difference when a glaze is applied between it and genuine gold leaf.



A “**Crackle Glaze**” is a very useful and attractive means of ageing a piece of gilded work.

I tried many recipes before I found one which was predictable. Many use an oil based and a water based varnish to get the effect, but I found these are very unpredictable. The crackle varnishes I

both use and sell are both water based so washing up is easy, but the main thing for me is that this two part crackle varnish is easy to predict, it makes a fine crackle. Simply apply a thin base coat and allow to dry, (it becomes transparent when dry). Then apply a thin top coat and allow to dry, the cracks form as it dries. For those who have used oil based crackle varnishes and found them difficult to predict and master, do not be put off, this water based two part crackle varnish is sure to work, I would say in normal conditions it is foolproof, just follow the simple instructions and it will work just fine, this crackle varnish is the easiest I have found both in use and in ease of results. The ambient temperature should be between 60 & 75 degrees but it will still work in higher temperatures than this. A normal room temperature works fine.



An “**Antique Glaze**” is a pigment which is applied to the gilded work in order to add character and imply age, you can simply rub the glaze over the gilded work with a finger or small cotton pad, the glaze will fill any slight irregularities and also impart a coloured cast to the work which is pleasing to the eye.

I use burnt umber glazes, burnt umber seems to me to be just the right tone to colour the gold in a pleasing way.



Gesso is excellent for creating a distressed interesting finish to a piece of work, but you do not have to use gesso in achieving an aged appearance to gold leaf, but it does add another dimension, it is not difficult to work with. I make my own recipe **gesso** it is simple to make and does a good job.



Tradition dictates that a special glue boiler is used...I just use a tin can and a saucepan with spacers placed inside the saucepan to keep the gesso away from the direct heat of the flame. Gesso can be used when you want to make a surface more interesting, or if you plan on wanting to polish the gold leaf to a bright finish. You can buy a ready mixed gesso but this form of

acrylic gesso cannot be burnished. Burnishing can help when you wish to create highlights of polished leaf. The recipe for my gesso is to be found at the end of this manual.

You will need **cotton wool** but this can be simply purchased anywhere in the world.

You will also need **methylated spirit**, Industrial Methylated Spirit (IMS) or any 90 proof industrial alcohol in order to mix the gold size and wash up brushes etc.

### Handling the Gold Leaf.



First scoop out about half a teaspoon of pumice powder with your gilders knife and put it on the cushion.



Using the gilders knife spread the powder over the surface of the cushion, use the edge of the knife, not the flat blade, and gently scrape the powder back and forth so that it covers the entire cushion.

Wipe the blade on the cushion to remove the powder from the knife, then brush off the surplus powder from the cushion again with your gilders knife.



Open your book of gold leaf and insert the blade under one of the leaves of gold. Some gilders use a shield around the cushion to prevent drafts from blowing the leaf around; I prefer to have a space where no drafts can get in. I suggest strongly that you should put the cat out when gilding, they can be so curious I have found.



Gently lift the leaf of gold over to your gilders cushion and lay the leaf out as flat as you can, practice will make you perfect at this. If the leaf does not lie down perfectly flat, you can gently blow down onto to the surface of the leaf; your breath should flatten out any irregularities.



I would say that this is flat enough for you to work with.

What we do next will depend on what we are gilding; I am preparing to gild the edge of a picture frame so I need small pieces of leaf to work with. If you are going to gild a large flat surface you may decide not to cut the leaf into smaller pieces, generally I have found that smaller pieces are easier to handle, but were I about to gild a large flat surface I might cut the leaf into four to work with or even work with single sheets.



As I said, for this piece of work I am going to gild the edges of a frame so I am cutting up the leaf into smaller pieces, this frame is simple for the purposes of illustration but of course if you are dealing with a complicated surface smaller pieces will help you anyway. Gently draw your knife through the leaf exerting a moderate pressure while doing so, if the edge of your knife is sharpened correctly one cut should be enough to cut the leaf.



Here you can see all the separate pieces of leaf cut up and ready to use



Next put a dab of Vaseline on the back of your hand a smear it over your hand in a circular motion to distribute the grease all over the back of your hand, we do not want blobs of grease left, rather a thin film should be distributed over surface.



Get a small pad of cotton wool and press it lightly onto the back of your hand which has the grease on.



With the lightly greased pad of cotton wool you will find that you can now easily pick up the pieces of gold leaf. There are other ways to handle gold leaf, but this is easy and predictable.

OK, this is how you handle gold leaf, if you have greasy skin you may find that rubbing the cotton wool pad down the side of your nose will pick up enough grease for you to pick up the pieces of gold leaf. All this did for me was to give me a sore nose, but I have seen it work with some people, I just mention it in passing.

### Preparing a Gold Size



Different people use different sizes when dealing with gold leaf. Tradition would say one should use an oil based size in order to deal with leaf; more modern approaches might say use an acrylic medium. I use shellac as a size because that is what I got used to using and it has the advantage of being an excellent sealing varnish as well as a size.

When all is said and done a gold size is simply an adhesive with which the gold leaf is stuck to the surface of the piece to be gilded.

I use shellac for two reasons, it is quick drying and I can use the size as a varnish to seal the work after gilding. Also the shellac I choose to use gives a nice tint to the work



It is very easy to prepare you simply add methylated spirit or Industrial Methylated Spirit (IMS) or any 90 plus proof industrial alcohol. Full instructions for mixing are given at the end of this manual.

You simply need to paint it on the surface of the work to be gilded.



### Working with gesso.

The gesso I make is very simple in preparation, the required amount of water is placed in the container together with the rabbit skin glue, you can use regular animal glue but tradition favors the use of rabbit skin glue as it is said to be stronger. The glue is left to dissolve overnight; I start with hot water to aid the dissolving of the glue.

For those folk with deep pockets you can purchase a water jacketed glue boiler, some form of device does need to be used to heat the gesso as gesso is applied when it is hot. Direct heat will badly affect the glue in the mix and will drastically affect the strength of the glue. As you can see I use a tin can and a saucepan. Underneath the tin can are some pieces of metal to keep the can away from the direct heat, the saucepan acts as a water jacket, fill the saucepan to about the same level as the gesso in the tin can. If you have one, a single electric hot plate near the work is ideal, I just take the saucepan to the work and the heat in the water keeps the gesso at a workable temperature.



case you will need a thin gesso to work with, likewise if you wish a perfectly smooth surface you will need to use a thinner gesso. The gesso is simply painted on with a brush.



forms. Recipes for thick and thin gesso's are at the end of this manual.

There are many different recipes for making gesso the one I favour is used in conjunction with the ingredients I sell from my site. The full recipe is given at the end of this manual. If you are using gesso to coat a picture frame with a complicated surface you will no doubt wish to keep the detail of the frame, in which

If however you want to create an interesting surface with a distressed appearance you will want a thicker gesso to work with.

The gesso will start to harden as soon as the heat has left it, it is during these minutes you can manipulate the gesso into interesting forms.

### Using a Ground



A ground is used to fill the grain of the wood and add colour. Traditionally the ground for use with gold leaf was a material called Armenian Bole, this was simply a red earth pigment found in Eastern Europe.

I use red ochre as it is cheaper than Armenian Bole and is a very similar colour. It is mixed with water for use, it serves to fill the grain of wood and also serves as a pleasing background on which to lay gold leaf, the leaf being so thin that

the red colour gives a warmer appearance to the leaf. Also as this colour has been used for so



long in gilding, when you apply a distressed finish to the leaf in which the background shows it gives the appearance of further authenticity. After applying the ground it may be necessary to brush off the dry pigment.

If you are not working with a wooden surface and still wish to use the red ochre ground as an undercoat you can mix the ground with the size and this will adhere to most surfaces.

### Working with a Glaze



A glaze is a coating which is applied to the surface of the gold to change its appearance in some way, often to make it look older.  
In this picture you can see how the gold leaf looks without any glaze being applied.



Here you can see the effect of applying a water based antique glaze, you can use a cloth or a brush to apply it, but in the case of a simple pigment glaze I prefer to use my finger, very useful things fingers.



Of course you can apply more than one coat of a glaze if you wish to darken the gold further.



I have found that the shellac itself when applied with a brush in order to seal the gold imparts a very good colour to the gold as you can see from the picture here.  
I supply a very good antique glaze from my web site.

### Working with a Crackle Glaze.



Applying my crackle glaze is very simple.  
After you have applied the ground and laid your gold leaf you simply apply the base coat, or first coat and leave it to dry, this base coat will remain sticky to the touch

even when "dry". Then you apply the top coat and leave that to dry. If you require large cracks apply a generous base coat, if you require lots of thin cracks apply a thin base coat. The cracks will form as the top coat dries.

It really is as simple as that, drying times will of course vary and for best results the ambient temperature should be between 60 & 70 degrees F.



My crackle glaze can be applied to paper with good results. In fact it can be applied to most surfaces that are grease free.

Generally speaking I apply the crackle varnish after I have gilded the piece and before I have applied any form of glaze, that is to say I apply the crackle directly onto the gold leaf or other surface.

### Laying the Gold Leaf



I am assuming that you are gilding a wooden object and that you have applied gesso and the red coloured ground. Apply a generous coat of shellac and let it dry which will only be 5 to 10 minutes. Gesso and wooden surfaces in general are porous and need to be sealed. If you are simply gilding onto wood without using gesso you will still need to seal the wood with the shellac.



After the sealing coat of shellac has been applied apply a further thinner coat, make sure to have your gold leaf cut up and ready to apply, as per the instructions on handling gold leaf. Carefully lift up a piece of gold leaf with a pad of cotton wool and **gently** press it onto the sized surface.

Shellac does dry quite quickly so I suggest you attempt to gild about 12 inches at a time if gilding the edge of a frame, then apply size as you move along the frame. If you are attempting to gild a large surface such as a wall panel I suggest you work with larger pieces of gold, perhaps by cutting the leaf into four pieces rather than the smaller pieces shown here. As you gain confidence in handling the leaf you may decide to work with larger pieces or even whole single sheets



If you find that the size has dried and the gold does not stick simply re-apply a thin coating of size and proceed as before.

When the size has dried, which will not take more than an hour at room temperature, the surplus gold can be brushed off. It is now that you would think of applying any glazes.

## Sealing your gilded surface

When you have finished gilding and applying any glazes, crackle varnish etc, then is the time to seal it. The shellac used as a size is perfect for this, just brush on a very thin coating to seal the work, if you wish you can apply further coats of the shellac, this will act as another glaze and will further add colour to the gilded surface.

## Further Distressed Finishes



I have limited myself to effects which are easy to obtain. This finish is a little trickier but it is so effective I include it here.

This is a paper print mounted onto wood. After the crackle glaze and antique glaze has been applied and has dried completely (leave for 24 hours at least) apply a thin coating of raw linseed oil with a cotton pad, work it in well and remove the surplus oil, we want a very thin film remaining. Pre-heat an oven to gas mark 1 and place the object in the oven, leave for 4 hours and you should have something like the effect illustrated here

I hope that with this information you can proceed to experiment on your own, if you have any questions I will be only too happy to help, I am Richard Norman. I can be contacted  
[edenworkshops@orange.fr](mailto:edenworkshops@orange.fr)

Please see below for the simple recipes to follow. At the end of the manual are the instructions for use of the kits I produce for achieving these effects.

**All of the materials are available from the [www.gold-vault.com](http://www.gold-vault.com) website; there are also kits available which will enable you to achieve all the finishes listed here.**

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## Recipes

**Size:** I have found a good working mixture to consist of 1 part shellac to 4 parts methylated spirits.

Just add the shellac to the methylated spirits, make sure this is a jar that can be sealed or the spirit will evaporate, leave the shellac overnight, turning the jar occasionally, it is ready to use when all the shellac has dissolved.

If you feel the size should be a little thicker you can make it by reducing the amount of spirit by 1 part, that is to say mix it 1 part shellac to three parts methylated spirit.

The coat given to seal the porous surfaces of wood or gesso should be quite generous.

The final coat given to seal the work should be very thin as the shellac will tint the work in the same way as an antique glaze.

## Size for gilding onto leather.

In order to gild onto leather you will need a special size, the shellac size will not work.

The traditional size is egg albumen glair and is made by carefully separating the white from an egg, take care none of the yolk is introduced. Add a drop or two of vinegar. The white is whisked and allowed to stand for several hours, the liquid at the bottom is glair, just gently pour off the liquid at the bottom and the glair is ready for use.

This glair does go off quite quickly and begins to smell bad; there is no advantage in using old stinking glair, though some will try to tell you it is better.

**A good alternative to egg albumen glair is a glair known as JHS glaire this can be purchased direct from my web site [here](#) It is simple to use and apply.**

**Ground:** The red ochre ground can be mixed between 1 and 1.5 parts ground to five parts water, for example the 15g of Red Ochre supplied in the kits and from the web site can be mixed with 50ml of water satisfactorily. To apply the ground simply brush on with a paint brush, it may be that you will have to brush off the surplus ground when it is dry.

If you are working on a non porous surface such as metal or glass and you still wish the red ground to be applied you should mix up the ground with shellac size to the same proportions.

**Gesso:** The recipe for gesso depends on what you are trying to achieve. If you are trying to gesso a finely detailed frame you will need a thin gesso which may have to be built up on separate coats. Or if you wish a very smooth surface once again I suggest using a thin gesso

For these purposes I suggest a gesso as follows; 1 part glue : 16 parts water : 32 parts whiting



For a thicker gesso which can be manipulated into interesting distressed finishes like these I recommend this recipe;

1 part glue : 16 parts water : 42 parts gesso.

Well, that's it, I hope you find this information of some use to you in your craft activities; I am always willing to help out if I can and I am able to be contacted at [edenworkshops@orange.fr](mailto:edenworkshops@orange.fr)

I will be issuing a monthly newsletter which will contain useful tips and other news which will be of interest look out for it in your mailbox.

Don't forget all the materials included in this manual can be purchased direct from our website at [www.gold-vault.com](http://www.gold-vault.com) we also have a sister website which deals with the Book Arts, you may find it of interest to you [www.edenworkshops.com](http://www.edenworkshops.com)

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These kits are available by from the [www.gold-vault.com](http://www.gold-vault.com) website

## Instructions for kits

### Instructions for Standard Antique Finish



We named this finish the Standard Antique Finish as it is so simple to prepare and apply and the results are a standard against which other simple antique finishes should be measured. The kit comes with;

One book of composition gold leaf,  
25g of shellac,  
15g of red ochre ground,  
10g antique glaze,  
Quality Artists 3 brush set.

There are sufficient materials to treat several A4 or letter sized frames.

First mix up the shellac size by adding 100ml of methylated spirit to the 25g sachet of raw shellac flakes, let the mixture stand overnight in a warm room, gently agitate the mixture from time to time, slowly the raw shellac flakes will dissolve completely in the methylated spirit. You will need methylated spirit to wash up your brushes.

Next add the 15g of red ochre with 50ml of water and mix thoroughly, you should check that the wood to be treated is both dry and grease free, rub it down with some fine grade sand paper if need be. Apply the ground with a paint brush, when dry you may have to brush off any surplus ground.

Handle the gold leaf in the way described in detail in the manual.

The size can dry quite quickly in room temperature; if you are gilding an edge of a frame I suggest applying the size with a paint brush and laying the gold leaf a few inches at a time depending on the size of the frame.

Pick up the gold leaf and gently press the leaf onto the sized area, repeat applying the size and laying the leaf as needed.

When the size is dry, about an hour at room temperature, brush off the surplus leaf, if there are any areas where the gold has not adhered, simply apply a little size and lay on a piece of leaf, if you are trying to create an antique appearance do not worry if small areas are not gilded, this will simply add to the overall appearance.

When the piece is completely dry, with your finger or a small piece of cotton cloth, rub over the surface with the burnt umber glaze, this will tone down the appearance of the gold and will form highlights.

Let the glaze dry completely and then give the gilded areas a thin coating of the size, this will both seal the work and give a slight tint to the gold.



This is an example of the sort of finish you should be able to achieve using this simple to prepare and apply finish.

### Instructions for Crackle Glaze Kit



The crackle glaze used in this kit will give dependable results that anyone can achieve providing the simple instructions are followed.

The kit comes with;

One book of composition gold leaf,  
25g of shellac,  
15g of red ochre ground,  
10g antique glaze,  
Quality Artists brush.  
50ml Crackle Base Coat  
50ml Crackle Glaze Top Coat

There are sufficient materials to treat several A4 or letter sized frames.

First mix up the shellac size by adding 100ml of methylated spirit to the 25g sachet of raw shellac flakes, let the mixture stand overnight in a warm room, gently agitate the mixture from time to time, and slowly the raw shellac flakes will dissolve completely in the methylated spirit. You will need methylated spirit to wash up your brushes.

Next add the 15g of red ochre with 50ml of water and mix thoroughly, you should check that the wood to be treated is both dry and grease free, rub it down with some fine grade sand paper if need be. Apply the ground with a paint brush, when dry you may have to brush off any surplus ground.

Handle the gold leaf in the way described in detail in the manual.

The size can dry quite quickly in room temperature; if you are gilding an edge of a frame I suggest applying the size with a paint brush and laying the gold leaf a few inches at a time depending on the size of the frame.

Pick up the gold leaf and gently press the leaf onto the sized area, repeat applying the size and laying the leaf as needed.

When the size is dry, about an hour at room temperature, brush off the surplus leaf, if there are any areas where the gold has not adhered, simply apply a little size and lay on a piece of leaf, if you are trying to create an antique appearance do not worry if small areas are not gilded, this will simply add to the overall appearance.

You can at this stage opt for the **Standard Antique Finish** and when the piece is completely dry, with your finger or a small piece of cotton cloth, rub over the surface with the burnt umber glaze, this will tone down the appearance of the gold and will form highlights.

**If however you wish to add a crackle glaze do not apply the burnt umber glaze at this point.**

Take the bottle of Crackle Glaze Base Coat and paint on a coating, the thicker the base coat the larger your cracks are going to be. Let this coat dry, it will appear a milky white when it is first applied, but when dry it will have become transparent, please note that this coat will still be sticky when it is dry, if this seems confusing just remember that when the base coat has become completely transparent it is time to add the top coat, this is simply brushed on, it is advisable to do all this work in normal room temperature. Leave the work for about an hour, or until the top coat is dry.

It is best to add the burnt umber glaze at this stage to highlight the cracks which will have formed, we are using a standard burnt umber glaze, but you can experiment with different colours to give different effects.



Here you can see the sort of effects you can achieve, as I have previously said, if small areas of the work do not take the gold leaf do not worry, this can in fact add to the overall effect quite nicely.

After adding the glaze, wipe off the surplus and allow the piece to dry.

Give the work a thin coating of size to seal everything, it will also add a slight tint to the gold which is pleasing to the eye, you can give further coats and this will add further colouration.

Do not forget that when it comes to applying a crackle glaze over a gilded area, you do not have to apply a crackle glaze to the whole surface, by painting on veins of crackle glaze you not only save on using it, you also create far more interesting effects, no need to go over the top with a crackle glaze, just apply it to small areas of your work to add interest.

## Instructions for Professional Kit



In this kit you have everything you need to achieve the Standard and Crackle Finishes, plus you can create "distressed" gesso finishes

The kit comes with;

Two books of composition gold leaf,  
25g of shellac,  
15g of red ochre ground,  
10g antique glaze,  
Quality Artists brush.  
50ml Crackle Base Coat  
50ml Crackle Glaze Top Coat  
380g gesso powder  
20g Rabbit Skin Glue

With this kit you have everything you need to create both the Standard Finish plus the Crackle Finish and also be able to create distressed finishes using gesso. There are sufficient materials to treat several A4 or letter sized frames.

First mix up the shellac size by adding 100ml of methylated spirit to the 25g sachet of raw shellac flakes, let the mixture stand overnight in a warm room, gently agitate the mixture from time to time, and slowly the raw shellac flakes will dissolve completely in the methylated spirit. You will need methylated spirit to wash up your brushes.

Next add the 15g of red ochre with 50ml of water and mix thoroughly, you should check that the wood to be treated is both dry and grease free, rub it down with some fine grade sand paper if need be. Apply the ground with a paint brush, when dry you may have to brush off any surplus ground.

Handle the gold leaf in the way described in detail in the manual.

The size can dry quite quickly in room temperature; if you are gilding an edge of a frame I suggest applying the size with a paint brush and laying the gold leaf a few inches at a time depending on the size of the frame.

Pick up the gold leaf and gently press the leaf onto the sized area, repeat applying the size and laying the leaf as needed.

When the size is dry, about an hour at room temperature, brush off the surplus leaf, if there are any areas where the gold has not adhered, simply apply a little size and lay on a piece of leaf, if you are trying to create an antique appearance do not worry if small areas are not gilded, this will simply add to the overall appearance.

You can at this stage opt for the **Standard Antique Finish** and when the piece is completely dry, with your finger or a small piece of cotton cloth, rub over the surface with the burnt umber glaze, this will tone down the appearance of the gold and will form highlights.

Rub in the burnt umber glaze and when dry seal the work with a thin coating of size. This is all you need to achieve the Standard Antique Finish.



Standard Antique Finish.

**If however you wish to add a crackle glaze do not apply the burnt umber glaze at this point.**

Take the bottle of Crackle Glaze Base Coat and paint on a coating, the thicker the base coat the larger your cracks are going to be. Let this coat dry, it will appear a milky white when it is first applied, but when dry it will have become transparent, please note that this coat will still be sticky when it is dry, if this seems confusing just remember that when the base coat has become completely transparent it is time to add the top coat, this is simply brushed on, it is advisable to do all this work in normal room temperature. Leave the work for about an hour, or until the top coat is dry.

It is best to add the burnt umber glaze at this stage to highlight the cracks which will have formed, we are using a standard burnt umber glaze, but you can experiment with different colours to give different effects.



Here

you can see the sort of effects you can achieve, as I have previously said, if small areas of the work do not take the gold leaf do not worry, this can in fact add to the overall effect quite nicely.

After adding the glaze, wipe off the surplus and allow the piece to dry.

Give the work a thin coating of size to seal everything, it will also add a slight tint to the gold which is pleasing to the eye, you can give further coats and this will add further colouration.

If however you wish to create something like the finish shown below you will need to work with gesso.



There is sufficient gesso in this kit to treat the edges of several A4 or letter size frames bear this in mind, you may decide not too mix up all the gesso at one go.

I have given the recipe I follow for making gesso, but here are the quantities to follow in this kit.

In general I find I need either a thick or a thin gesso to work with, which one will suit your needs depends on what you are going to gesso prior to gilding. If you have a finely detailed wooden figure to gild, you should opt for the thin recipe gesso. If on the other hand you are feeling creative and wish to come up with something like these “distressed” gesso finishes then I recommend using the thicker of the two recipes.

### **Thin Recipe Gesso**

Take the contents of the sachet of Rabbit Skin Glue and add it to 200ml of warm water and allow to dissolve stirring occasionally.

I prefer to add water to the whiting, not whiting to the water, I find I do not have to spend a lot of time getting rid of lumps, try to take care not to get air bubbles in the mixture.

### **Thick Recipe Gesso**

Take the contents of the sachet of Rabbit Skin Glue and add it to 140ml of warm water and allow to dissolve stirring occasionally.



You cannot simply mix gesso up in a saucepan and heat it, the direct heat will drastically affect the strength of the glue which is something to avoid.

For those folk with deep pockets you can purchase a water jacketed glue boiler, some form of device does need to be used to heat the gesso as gesso is applied when it is hot. As you can see I

use a tin can and a saucepan. Underneath the tin can are some pieces of metal to keep the can away from the direct heat, the saucepan acts as a water jacket, fill the saucepan to about the same level as the gesso in the tin can. If you have one, a single electric hot plate near the work is ideal, I just take the saucepan to the work and the heat in the water keeps the gesso in a workable temperature.

If using the thin gesso one would now apply thin coats of the gesso to the areas being gilded allowing time for each coat to dry before applying the next, only you can judge how many coats to give as each coat will reduce the amount of fine detail of the object to be gilded.

If one is following the creative urge and wishes to use the thicker gesso and improvise a "distressed" finish I recommend using one of the larger paint brushes in the kit and building up a finish something like this shown in the photograph.



To achieve this sort of finish you will have to work with the gesso as it is drying, you can effectively work with an edge about 12 inches long, tease the gesso up into peaks as it dries, don't be afraid to try this, it is very simple and is effective.

Allow the piece time to dry thoroughly, at least several hours in a room with normal temperature.

When dry the gesso will be very hard, the glue helps to bind the gesso together and also aids the gesso in adhering to the wood.



These is the time to make sure you have prepared your gold leaf for handling, have everything ready and to hand, as you will soon have to lay the gold leaf, there is a large section of this manual devoted solely to handling gold leaf, it would be best to refer to it if unsure.

You can now give the gessoed area a coat of red ochre ground if you wish a traditional appearance. Allow the ground time to dry thoroughly and apply a coating of size with a paint brush.

This first coat is intended to seal the gesso, it will soak in quickly, let it dry, only a matter of minutes is needed in normal room temperature , do not work with more than 12 inches of frame (if frame is being gilded) at a time, the size dries quite quickly.

Apply a second coat of size and pick up a piece of gold leaf with a pad of greased cotton wool, gently lay the leaf onto the size and press very gently, the pressure will force the leaf into the irregularities, the leaf may break up a little because of the irregular surface, but this all goes to create the distressed appearance we are looking for.

Work your way all around the edge of the frame, it doesn't matter if areas of the red ochre ground show through, once again this is all going to achieve the effect we want, you can always go back and touch up areas you feel need it later on. And try not to panic, there is no hurry about this, just concentrate on the area to be treated and go one step at a time.

Now is the time to consider whether or not you want to add a crackle glaze to all or part of the areas we have gilded, you do not have to do this to achieve the distressed gessoed finish we have been dealing with, but it is an option you have, great effect can be achieved just by adding a small area of crackle glaze to a frame, it creates interest.



After you have applied the gold leaf and you are happy with the way it looks, now is the time to apply an antique glaze, in the kit is 10g of burnt umber glaze which will give you the desired effect, what we want to do is simply rub the burnt umber glaze over the surface we have just gilded, I find a finger works very well, but you can use a small pad of cotton cloth if you wish, make sure to rub the colour in well as it needs to fill any cracks. Allow the glaze to dry.

Lastly the finish can be sealed with a thin coating of size, I like the simplicity of this size which acts as sealing coat as well.

That is the end of the instructions, if you hit problems or feel the need for advice I will be happy to communicate with you via email. Richard Norman at [edenworkshops@orange.fr](mailto:edenworkshops@orange.fr)  
All these kits and materials can be purchased at the [www.gold-vault.com](http://www.gold-vault.com) web site.

