

An Introduction to Encaustic Art by Lorraine Priestley.

The Art

The art of encaustic wax painting is at least 2,500 years old. It was practiced by the Ancient Greeks, Romans and Egyptians.

It is a very durable art form, sometimes lasting 2,000+ years.

The literal translation of encaustic is *to burn in*, meaning the new layer must be fused with heat to the layer beneath.

True encaustic painting is a process in which coloured wax is permanently 'burned' into an absorbent backing such as plaster, canvas and some woods.

The technique of laying wax on a non-absorbent backing is today generally thought of as encaustic art.

Encaustic 'paint'

For their paintings the Ancients used a mixture of beeswax and natural resins combined with earth pigments. Today there are several ranges of specialised encaustic waxes available.

Do not be tempted to try and make your own as mixing the pigment with beeswax is a specialised process. Childrens' crayons are very poor and do not work!

Buy good quality materials as these will result in more predictable control. Explore the different waxes, their range of colours and handling characteristics.

Encaustic waxes melt as 60-75°C (140-170°F). Heated tools for direct working of wax must therefore operate at low temperature because if they are too hot the wax becomes watery, difficult to control and may fume or smoke.

The Tools

The basic tool is a small iron. Choose one of the specialized painting irons that are available as they have good thermostatic control.

These irons can also be inverted to work as a heated palette which is useful for more advanced techniques.

Do not use a steam travel iron as these have holes in the base plate which will block up and stop you getting a smooth effect (also prove impossible to clean!)

A stylus is a heated tool that is similar to a soldering iron but does not get nearly as hot. There are a variety of working tips you can use with them including mini-iron, brush tip and pen type.

The art work is best worked on a good quality non-absorbent card although wood, glass, composite boards, fabrics and other surfaces can be used.

As an encaustic art beginner, you do not need to know what to *do*, you just need to start *doing* and enjoy what happens.

I found Michael Bossom most helpful for the supply of my equipment.

Michael Bossom, Arts Encaustic Ltd, Glogue, Pembrokeshire, Wales. SA36 0ED

Tel: 01239 831401 Fax: 01239 831767

E-mail: info@encausic.com Web site: www.encaustic.com

Some useful books and DVDs:

Encaustic Art

How to Paint with Wax By Michael Bossom

Basic Techniques of Modern Wax Painting Published by Search Press Ltd 1997

Creative beginnings and developing techniques

A FULL COLOUR 64 page book 260mm x 204mm

Highly visual this book graphically describes the methods for developing creative wax art from a set of chaotic abstract marks into a series of controllable techniques.

Price: £7.95

Encaustic Art - The Project Book By Michael Bossom

Creative ideas and developing techniques

FULL COLOUR 96 page book 260mm x 204mm

Highly visual, this book graphically describes methods for beginning and multiple approaches for developing your creative wax art skills whether you are just starting out into an art experience - "Help! I can't paint" - or whether you are an accomplished exponent of encaustic or other art mediums

Price: £9.95

Wax Art - By Hazel Marsh

This complete guide to encaustic art begins with the tools and materials you need, encourages you to experiment with great new ideas for landscape, floral and fantasy pictures and shows you how to print wax transfers on fabric.

See for yourself how easy wax painting is by trying out these projects: greetings cards and gift tags, framed designs for calendars and book covers, embroidered pictures for cushion covers and a tote bag and teenager's back pack. New paperback with 122 pages

Price: on eBay for £2.99 plus £2.75 postage in UK (£4.49 to Ireland)

Learn the skills - DVD -DVD version of this program makes it easy to learn the skills.

About 20 images are taught. All A6 (postcard size) covering abstract, pattern, mantilla, landscapes, horizon types, tissue working, fantasy castles, rubber stamps and more too. A favourite to expand the basic skills of iron and stylus use.

Price: £19.95

A Bigger Picture - DVD - "A Bigger Picture" has been made to help you jump up the card sizes - A5 then A3 work.

Based on landscapes, this program will show you how to approach bigger work with confidence. Lots of foxglove too!

Price: £11.90