

The Wonderful World of Wax: Encaustics 101

Glossary of Terms

Accretion technique	in encaustics this is a process of dry brushing to create texture, then fusing lightly to ensure a bond with the layer below
Aesthetic	a personal sense of what is beautiful, developed through visual literacy
Aesthetic decision making	a process of making decisions about your work in progress: composition, what to do next, when is it finished, etc.
Beeswax	1. a yellowish or dark brown wax secreted by honeybees for constructing honeycombs 2. this wax after refining, purifying, etc, used in polishes, ointments, and for modelling
Burnisher	a tool, usually with a smooth, slightly convex head, used for polishing
Composition	in visual art, the act of ordering elements to form an aesthetic arrangement
Concept	the underlying idea that is being communicated by the artwork or series
Contrast	dualities in colour, value, size, texture and hundreds of other variables that are used to create interest, focal point and meaning
Diagonal composition	diagonal organization of main structural elements in your work, creating a feeling of energy, dynamism, tension and/or imbalance
Diptych	a composition that is divided across two substrates
Double pointed whistler (also known as an etching tool or metal stylus)	a double ended steel etching tool with sharp points that can be used for inscribing lines into wax
Dry brush technique	a process of applying wax as it is in the process of drying that can be used to create textured areas and imperfection
Emphasis	in our case, prominence, as of form or outline
Encaustic	literally “to burn in” from Latin and Greek. The art of painting with wax, one of the most ancient art forms
Encaustic medium	a combination of beeswax and damar resin. The damar is added to make the wax more resilient and transparent
Encaustic wax	encaustic medium with the addition of coloured pigment

Focal point	the area of a composition that draws the eye. There are many ways to achieve this, including (you guessed it) contrast, grouping, convergence, the unexpected...
Horizontal composition	horizontal organization of main structural elements in your work, creating a feeling of rest, stability, serenity and space
Microcrystalline wax	a petroleum based wax that has a high melting point and is resilient and flexible when cool. It is darker than paraffin wax and will yellow over time, so is most often used in pigmented applications
Scumble	a process of applying various colours, usually with a stiff bristled brush, imperfectly so as to have translucency and texture emerge from the combination
Stipple	to apply dots of pigment in varying density in order to obtain a range of value
Substrate	the material onto which we apply our media, i.e. wooden panel, matte board, etc.
Texture	variation, or lack of, in consistency of the finished surface of your work
Thumbnail sketches	miniatures, drawn to scale in your sketchbook, that enable you to organize your main elements and experiment with value, line, and other elements of composition and design
Tonal contrast	values of light and dark within the same colour range
Vertical composition	vertical organization of the main structural elements in your work, creating a feeling of dominance, permanence, power, strength and stability