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Embossed Metal Encaustics

(art + social studies)

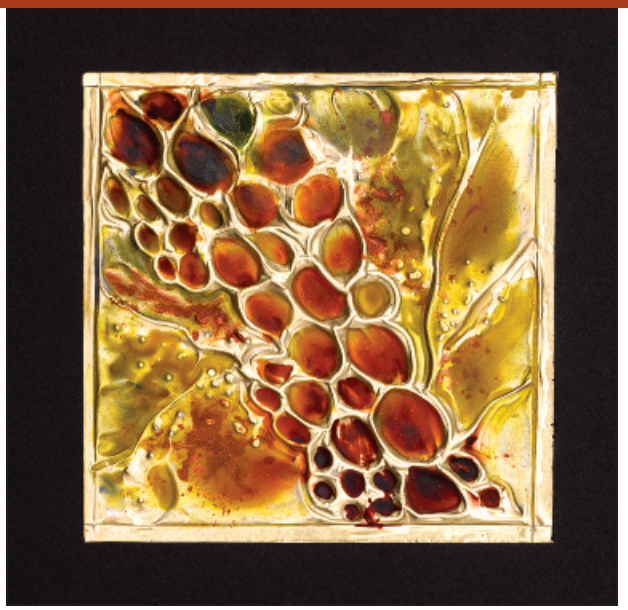
Derived from the Greek word "enkaustikos," meaning "to heat" or "to burn," wax-based paints have been used by artists and craftsmen since the 5th century.

Considered a lost art for many centuries, encaustic painting is enjoying a resurgence because of modern techniques, tools and materials. Choices of waxes, surfaces and colors have also made encaustic painting safer, easier and more affordable than ever.

While encaustic painting requires moving molten wax from a heating element to a surface, the technique used in this lesson plan creates textured "reservoirs" in metal foil that channel and cradle sprinkled wax as it melts. Interesting dimensions and contrasts between the metal and translucent wax occur when cooled.

Grade Levels 5-12

Note: instructions and materials are based upon a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.



Materials

Two-Tone Tooling Foil, 38-Gauge, 12" wide, 25-ft roll, (60504-4050); share one roll across class

Ten Seconds Studio Metal Tools, Texture set of 6 (60516-1002); share 4 across class

Premium Wax, 4-lb block (61101-000); one block

Candle Dye, assorted colors* (60987-4001); share at least three colors across class

Crayola® Crayons, 16 color set (20103-1008); share one set between two students

Craftsticks, box of 1,000 (60401-1001); need two per student

Electric skillet or warming tray

Cheese grater, butter knife (do not use for food preparation)

Mounting board: matboard or chipboard

Optional Materials:

Krylon® 1301 Crystal Clear, 11-oz can (21703-1001)

*** Yellow and Green contain a dye that is a known carcinogen if ingested. Wash hands after using and before eating.

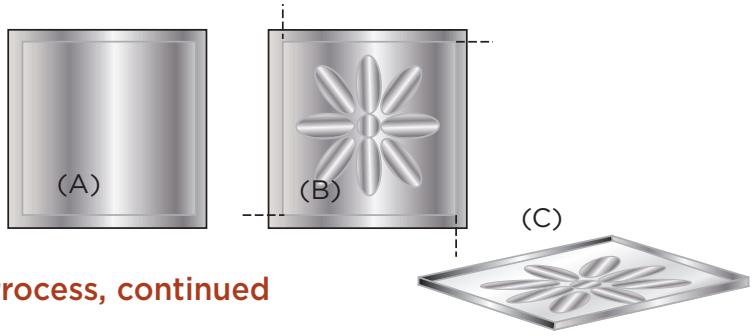
Preparation

1. Cut metal into 6" x 6" or larger pieces.
2. Prepare Premium Wax for easy distribution across class. Small amounts can be shaved from the block with a cheese grater or butter knife. To prepare larger quantities, a food processor or electric grater may be used. To break the wax into smaller pieces for processing, place the wax block in a freezer overnight. Wrap in 3 plastic bags. Throw forcefully onto a sidewalk or concrete surface to shatter or hit repeatedly with a hammer.
3. Prepare Candle Dye blocks for easy distribution by shaving with a cheese grater or food processor, .

Process

1. Create a soft surface for embossing by stacking newspapers, magazines or foam sheets. Using a ruler and a small tool, draw a border 1/4" from all sides; see (A). Keep the design within the border.

   Decide which side of the metal will be facing up and tool from both sides, creating raised surfaces and deep areas.



Process, continued

Tips:

— Melted wax will flow to the lowest areas unless "walls" are created to hold it.

— Create textured surfaces to add interest and to help the wax adhere. "Roughen" areas that will be filled with wax using texture tools, a wire brush or even sandpaper.

2. Snip from the edge to the border once at each corner; see (B). Fold edges up and bend corners to form a tray; see (C). Make sure the tray sits as flat as possible.
3. Place tray on electric skillet or warming plate. Premium Wax is a blend of paraffin waxes, with a relatively low melting temperature of 148°F. Sprinkle small bits of wax over design. Wax should melt slowly — do not overheat.
4. Place small pieces of candle dye directly into the melted wax. Use a wooden craft stick to blend or marblize colors. Use Crayons to extend the color selection and add detail. Avoid touching the tray with fingers.
5. Turn off the heating plate and allow it to cool for a few minutes before attempting to move it. If more color is desired after viewing the cooled piece, simply turn the heat on again and continue working.
6. After allowing the tray to cool for 10 minutes, gently push down the edges and burnish them with a craftstick or flat tool. The border can be trimmed off with scissors or left in place.
7. Finished pieces are susceptible to cracking if bent or pressed. Mount them to a rigid board, such as matboard, foamboard or chipboard for protective support. Glue the pieces onto the board, or cut the board to the size of the design and wrap the metal border onto the board.
8. When the metal has been mounted to a rigid support, use a soft cloth to buff the surface of the wax to a soft sheen. Use small, circular motions and very light pressure.

Watch the Lesson at:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LNshKqsTQ5o&feature=youtu.be

Options:

— R&F™ Encaustic Paints (01101-3180) may be used instead of Premium Wax and Candle Dyes. Melting temperature is 220°F.

— If cracking occurs, or a glossy finish is desired, apply 2-3 coats of Krylon Crystal Clear spray. Follow all label instructions and precautions and keep it away from children.

— Place inclusions into the melted wax, which will hold them in place until the piece cools. Ideas for inclusions:

- natural objects: flowers, leaves, seeds, bark and more
- Jacquard® Pearl-Ex® Metallic Pigments (27103-) assorted colors
- small beads
- bits of paper or photos

National Standards for Visual Art Education

Content Standard #1 Understanding and applying media, techniques and processes.

5-8 Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

9-12 Students apply media, techniques and processes with sufficient skill, confidence and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks.

Content Standard #4 Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and cultures.

5-8 Students analyze, describe and demonstrate how factors of time and place (such as climate, resources, ideas and technology) influence visual characteristics that give meaning and value to a work of art.

9-12 Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times and places.