



Faux Encaustics Recipes

(Acrylic Imitation Encaustics)

by Marjorie Sarnat

The following are basic recipes for using acrylics to produce the appearance of traditional hot wax encaustics.

These recipes will result in an authentic beeswax encaustics look. You can customize the recipes by using your own colors and proportions of mediums and additives. Experiment away, knowing that every acrylic product is compatible with every other. It's ok to mix and match acrylic brands, such as Golden and Liquitex, as well.

Don't be reluctant to slather on the "wax" mixtures. Acrylics lose volume as they dry, so make sure you create enough texture to suit your preference. However, the thicker the application, the longer it will take to dry.

1 Bleached (or Refined) Pourable Acrylic Beeswax

This recipe creates a smooth, matte surface with minimal color and just a bit of "clouding" and opalescent glimmer.

- Soft Gel Gloss – 2oz.
- Soft Gel Matte – ½ oz.
- Water – 1-1/2 oz.
- Fluid Interference Blue (fine) - 4 drops
- Fluid Iridescent Gold (fine) – 1 drop

This mix will soften contrast and add depth to your surface, but will not significantly alter the colors beneath it. Add more water to make it even thinner and more fluid, if you prefer.

2 Yellow Acrylic Beeswax

This gives a warm, yellow-toned beeswax color. It has a creamy consistency, like yogurt. Apply this

mixture with a brush or a palette knife.

- Soft Gel Matte – 8oz
- Fluid Naples Yellow Hue – 2 drops
- Fluid Quinacridone Nickel Azo/Gold – 1 drop
- Fluid Interference Red – 2 drops

This mix will slightly obliterate the contrast of the colors under it while adding an antiqued mellowed-with-age effect. Because it goes on thicker than recipe # 1, it produces more depth and will veil the under layers a bit more, as well.

3 Unrefined Acrylic Beeswax

This mix has a stiff viscosity (consistency) with a radiant, translucent yellow finish. It goes on thicker than Recipe # 2 and takes the longest to dry. Apply this mixture with a palette knife or stiff brush.

- High Solid Gel Matte – 8 oz.
- Fluid Interference Blue (fine) – 4 to 6 drops
- Fluid Quinacridone Nickel Azo/Gold – 1 to 3 drops

This mix is great to use for embedding things in your composition. It will significantly alter the color of whatever it covers, creating a cloudy amber glow. If you wish to have the extra depth this mix produces, but forego a yellowed effect, substitute a pearly white or other color for the fluid Azo/Gold, or try using a fraction of a drop of the Azo/Gold.

Feel free to alter any recipe according to your preference. For example, you could make recipe #1 with the color of recipe #3 or with any other colors you choose.



HOW IT WORKS

Real wax encaustics have a cloudy effect, which is translucent rather than being entirely transparent. It also has a slight iridescent appearance. Beeswax, which is usually used for hot wax encaustics, has a warm yellow color. It has a subtle shine, as well.

Acrylic Mimicry: Analyzing the appearance of authentic beeswax will give you guidelines for customizing acrylic recipes to suit your artistic needs.

- Wax has a satin-like finish, which has a subtle shine.
- By mixing gloss and matte mediums together, you achieve a satin finish. Adjust proportions of gloss with matte to get the degree of shine (or not) you prefer. Keep in mind that matte mediums dry slightly cloudier than do gloss mediums.
- The paint color you add to your mixture will tint it and also add a bit of opacity, creating cloudiness. The level of cloudiness depends on the type and amount of paint you add.
- Gold, yellow, and amber colors will achieve a natural (yellowish) beeswax color.
- The interference colors provide the slight iridescence, which is characteristic of wax.

COOL THE MIX

I've used blue, lavender, and green substitutions for the warm colors, with minimal or no Azo/Gold. The blue and lavender produced a cooler effect that appeared quite ethereal to me. The green produced a dusty, distressed effect, which I wanted.

VIVID COLOR

I added an extra amount of a vivid magenta color into mix # 2, which produced a glowing effect that almost obliterated the layer beneath it. I added more gel to the mix to make it more translucent and used both variations over different parts of my surface.

TEXTURES

Feel free to experiment with other matte gels that have texturizing mix-ins, such as glass bead gels, string gels, and so forth. Or mix your own stuff into them.

WAX OR WHATEVER

My experiments didn't necessarily look like beeswax, but I liked the look; these techniques are all about what you wish to do.

GLOSS OR MATTE

You may substitute gloss gels for matte gels, and matte for gloss wherever you wish. The matte gels will result in a bit cloudier surface than do the gloss gels.

VISCOSITY

Experiment with more less viscosity in your recipes. Add water to thin recipe #1. Substitute or add more high solid gel (heavy gel) for a thicker viscosity of a recipe. Substitute or add more soft gel to thin a recipe without making it too fluid and runny.

DRYING TIME

Several factors effect the drying time of the recipes.

Generally, the thicker the mix the longer it take to dry. Recipe # 3 can take several hours to dry. In recipe # 1, the amount of water added will effect the drying time, too. The thickness of your application and your under surface will be factors, as well.

LAYERING

Faux encaustics look rich and beautiful when applied to a surface in layers. Make sure the application is completely dry before adding another layer.

- **Optical color mixes:**
Layering one tint over another. For example, you may start with a yellowish layer of "wax," let it dry, then add a pale magenta layer over that to achieve a burnished rust appearance. The color possibilities are many.



- Embedding items and painted passages:
Embed printed images on your first layer of “wax.” Let it dry. Paint onto this layer as well, if you wish, let dry, then add another layer. Continue embedding and painting as many layers as you wish.

INTAGLIO

When your layer of “wax” is almost dry, but still has a soft surface, carve into it with a scribe of some sort, such as a pencil, metal awl, palette knife tip, etc. Let it dry completely, then rub or drip color into the inscribed marks, and wipe away the excess from the top surface. You will have a look that accents your surface texture. When this is dry, you may layer more acrylic wax over it, if you wish.

FAUX ENCAUSTICS COLLAGE

The “cloudy, glimmering glazes” you get with these recipes works wonderfully with collage techniques, including rice papers, transfers, prints, and more. Clouding some images is a great way to control the focus in a composition. And faux encaustics’ ability to embed things within a surface excites the imagination.

4 “Antiquing Patina”

This is essentially a glaze that you let pool in the crevices of your surface; it gives an aged look to your artwork. Experiment with substitute colors, as well.

Use equal parts of raw umber and iron oxide, but adjust the proportions to your taste. The more glazing liquid you use, the more transparent your patina will be. Mix together:

- Fluid raw umber
- Fluid iridescent micaceous iron oxide
- Acrylic glazing liquid (gloss finish)

Use a soft cloth to apply the patina, then wipe off the excess patina, leaving the mixture in the crevices and buffing the pigments into the gel surface. To get a more subtle effect, reduce or omit the iridescent micaceous iron oxide from the mixture.

Happy Creating!

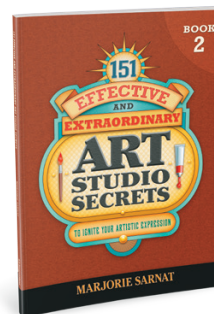
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