

CAROL ESTES - NATURAL ELEMENTS & BEESWAX ENCAUSTICS

I am an Art Photographer, but always seeking new methods to create a different look. Natural elements found around us make for creative projects.

Beeswax Encaustics is a combination of natural beeswax, with the color removed, and damar resin, a hardener, that offsets the soft texture of beeswax.

It is heated to 200 ° and spread over my surface. I use a regular kitchen griddle, and a glass jar. Beeswax is packaged granulated, and melts fairly quickly. I use brushes made of real hair, hog, horse or maybe ox bristles, so they don't melt in the heat. I paint the liquid encaustic onto the surface. It immediately hardens on contact, since it cools very, very quickly. The next step is using a hair dryer on low. It melts the beeswax again, allowing it to move more evenly over the surface. I move it back and forth, heating a small section at a time. When the surface looks less bumpy, I use the hair dryer across the entire surface, so all the beeswax leaves a consistent opaque finish. When I work in a large open space, I keep toothpicks handy. The brush can shed a hair, my cat may shake behind me, or a bug can fall flat into the beeswax by accident. Art is always a bit of a circus.

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Sometimes, there is a focal point that needs to stand out. During the brushing process, I will move beeswax away or lift it off to thin it in places. All the processes are individual artistic choices. Every artist has their own perspective. When I decide the piece has the opaque finish it deserves, I set it aside to fully cool. I let the warm project set aside for about an hour.

As I collect natural elements for art projects, I have found they can build into interesting, unexpected ways. Roots and driftwood can become natural framing for my encaustics. Many of the natural elements are decomposing on the ground. I will use a two part resin, paint part or all of the surface to firm it up so it won't peel.

Encaustics transform every photograph, and can provide exciting surprises when applied. Mother Nature offers great resources for a new lease on life with natural elements.

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