

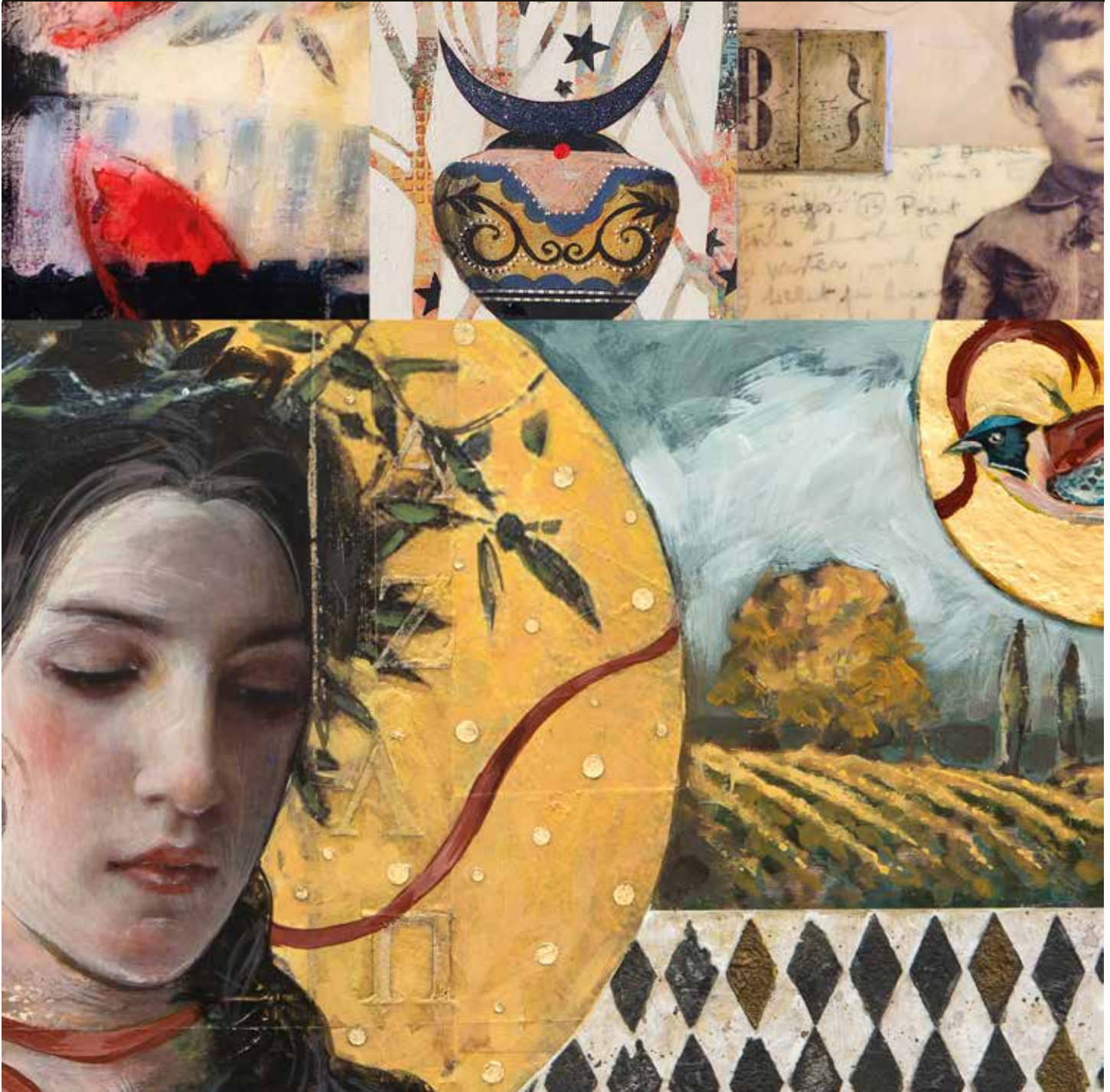


# Final Finishes & Faux Encaustic

[ gloss to matte finishes to faux encaustics ]

by **Darlene Olivia McElroy** | [darleneoliviamcelroy.com](http://darleneoliviamcelroy.com)

A step by step workbook teaching you how to finish your art with isolation coats, final finishes, faux encaustics and cold wax.



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# Final Finishes & Faux Encaustic

[ gloss to matte finishes to faux encaustics ]

We all have our personal preferences when it comes to the final finish of our paintings. Sometimes when you are starting out, it is difficult to figure out how to get that perfect finish. I work with gloss medium until I am ready for my final finish which may be a spray, polymer medium or gel. These guidelines shown here should help you out. Currently, encaustics are very popular, but who wants to buy more product when you can do this acrylic gels you already have. There are three faux encaustic (simulated wax encaustic) recipes included in this free tutorial.

## What is an Isolation Coat?

An isolation coat protects your art at different stages, is added before your final finish and can be removed if you do not like the next layer applied or if your work needs to be restored at a later date. In addition, it gives your art a slick surface. Many surface techniques like alcohol, salt and plastic wrap work more dramatically on a slick surface.

When you want to start building depth with further techniques apply a gloss medium to your surface.



Use this technique to protect painting periodically.



A sponge or rubber brush gives an even texture.

## Removing an Isolation Coat

If you have a background that you want to protect add an isolation coat. Later, if you apply paint that you aren't happy with, you can then remove the unwanted paint by spritzing the surface with alcohol and gently rubbing off the unwanted paint. This can be done with a shop cloth or paper towel. Let this dry and repeat several times.



When dry, continue painting.

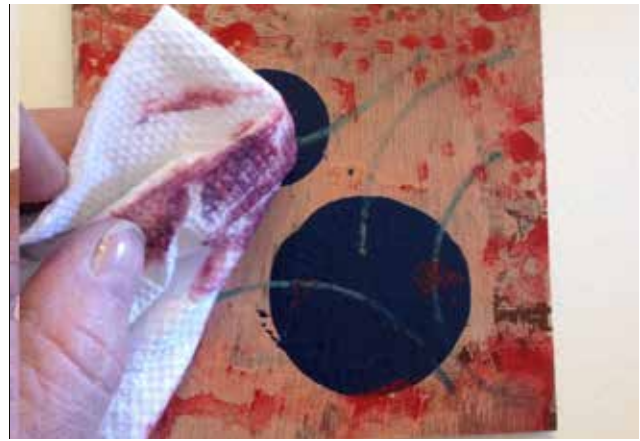
### Tip

Use gloss medium while working on your art then make your final finish (gloss, semi-gloss or matte) when you are finished with your painting. If you work with matte medium throughout your creative process, your work will be ghosted and cloudy.





Spritz alcohol on the unwanted paint.



Rub off paint with a clean shop cloth or paper towel.



When surface is cleaned, reapply isolation coat.



Continue painting adding an isolation coat periodically.

## Gloss Finish

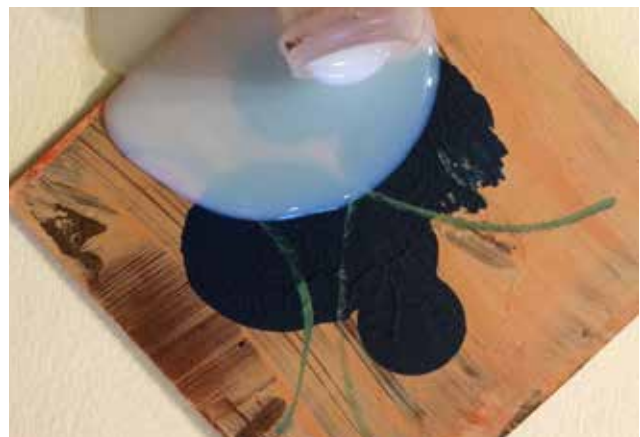
You can make your own mixture of 20% water and either Self-Leveling Gel or Clear Tar Gel. Liquitex also has a pouring medium or you can use a spray varnish. If you are using the water/gel mixture, wait over night before applying to your surface. This allows any bubbles from mixing to dissipate. Pour gel mixture very close to your surface and slowly to prevent bubbles. Also use a foam brush or rubber brush.



Clear Tar Gel or a Self-Leveling Gel work well.



Mix 20% water & gel. Mix well. Let sit overnight.



When applying, pour close to surface.



Spread with a foam or rubber brush.



You will get a light shine with the first layer.



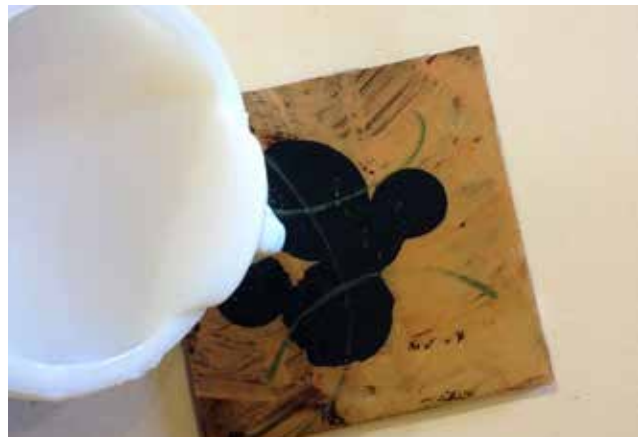
It will get more shine with each additional layer.

## Tip

One layer will give you a light shine. Applying multiple layers will give you a very gloss finish. The look will have a faux resin look.

## Gloss Pour Finish

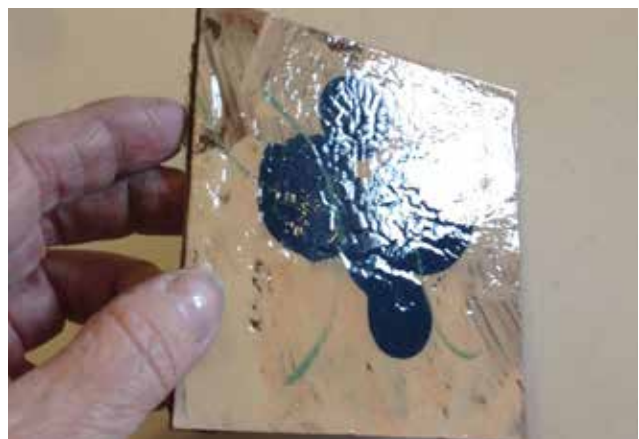
Want a thick look? Apply multiple thin layers of Self-Leveling Gel or Clear Tar Gel than one thick one. If you apply the gel too thick, you will get crazing. If poured to thick, you will get cracks or rivers that appear in your finish. Note: Because your finish may feel dry (cured) to the touch does not mean it is. It can take up to a year to be totally cured. So if you are shipping your art, wrap in plastic not bubble wrap to ensure that your art doesn't get a pattern on the finish.



Pour slowly then spread with foam or rubber brush.



**3** Note how thick the gel is.



The finish will be super shiny yet shows surface texture.



## Matte Finish

We all have matte medium in the studio. This product will give you a nice matte finish.



Matte medium is available from many companies.



Apply to surface and let dry.



The finished look is a nice matte finish.

## Dead Flat Finish

There is a matte finish and then there is a Dead Flat matte. Nothing makes your art as matte as this product does. This is actually my new favorite for creating a matte finish. It flattens all the layers of color so it looks like just one layer.



Use Dead Flat Varnish for a very flat matte look.



Apply as usual.



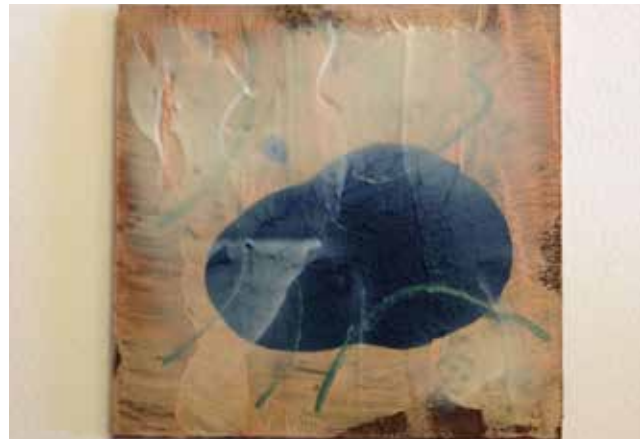
Your surface will have absolutely no shine to it.

## Matte Gel

Matte gel will look white when applied. This is the moisture in the gel that will evaporate out as it cures. The finish will be a thick matte surface.

## Matte Gel with Graphite Powder

I like to scribe into it with an exacto knife when it is dry and apply graphite powder to age it. Take a brush to make sure it goes in the scribed lines then wipe off the excess with a damp paper towel.



Apply matte gel. It will look white until dry.



Powdered graphite



Scribe with exacto then rub graphite into surface.



Wipe off excess graphite with damp paper towel.



Finished look is matte, aged and grunged.

## Golden's Archival Varnish MSA Sprays

These should be used after a final isolation coat. The sprays come in gloss, satin, and matte. I prefer the satin as I find gloss finishes are hard to photograph and can have too much glare when placed in a room with direct light. The matte can get a white dusty look if you over spray.



Place inside of a tobacco or other bag.



## Combining Finishes

If I want a thick look with a different finish, I might try a dead flat finish or satin spray over a Self-Leveling Gel or Clear Tar Gel. Just remember it is easy to make a gloss surface satin or matte but you can never get a matte surface to have the clarity of a gloss finish.



Satin spray over tar gel gives you a thick satin look.



Dead Flat over tar gel gives you a thick matte look.

### Tip

I create 4" x 4" samples of all the finishes. I mark on the back what I used (whether one coat or several). I refer back to these samples prior to finishing a painting.

## Faux Encaustics

Each artist has their own faux encaustic recipe. Always do a test sheet first starting with the smallest dap of color and slowly adding more color.

The simplest is soft gel matte with a very small dap/drop of Quinacridone nickel azo gold (QNAG). This mix will slightly obliterate the contrast of the colors under it while adding an antiqued mellowed-with-age effect. Because of the thickness, it produces depth and veils the under layers.



Test mixing different amounts of gel & QNAG.



Make notes of percentages.



Tinted gel dries translucent.



The gel will look opaque until it dries or cures.



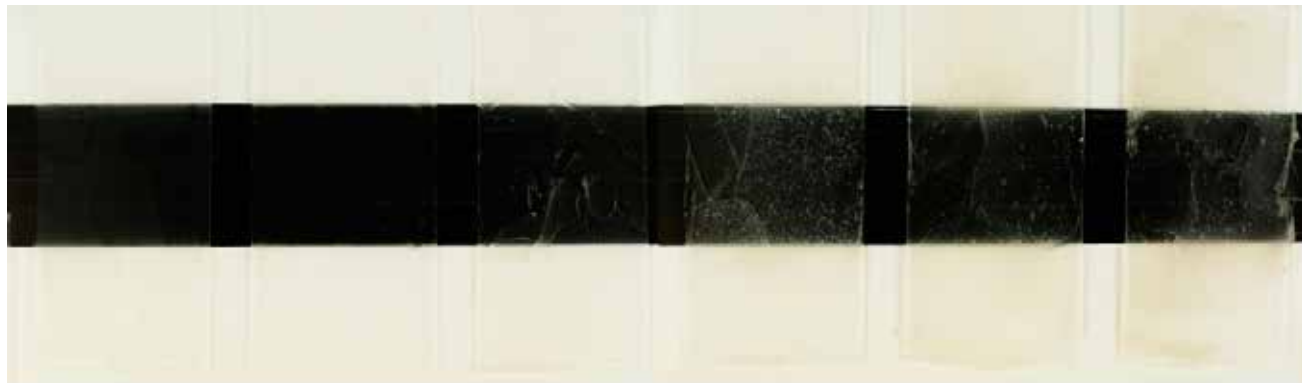
Note the color shift of underlying colors when dry.

## Faux Encaustics Recipes from Golden Paints

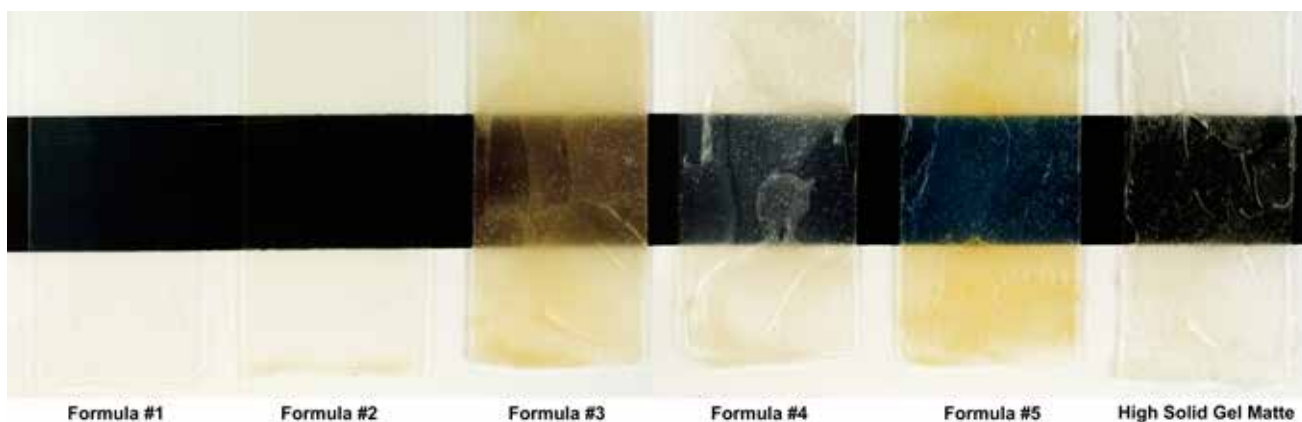
[ <http://www.justpaint.org/creating-an-encaustic-look-with-acrylics/> ]

It is possible to get an “encaustic” look with matte gels or mediums on their own, but mixing various ratios of matte gels and mediums with different amounts of paint can give a more enhanced look of actual beeswax.

This look can be achieved with a range of options from a very fluid medium like Fluid Matte Medium or Matte Medium, to a thicker consistency that can be brushed or tooled with a palette knife, such as Soft Gel (Matte or Semi-Gloss) or Regular or Heavy Gel (Matte or Semi-Gloss). If a very thick and pasty material is preferred, the Extra Heavy Gel (Matte or Semi-Gloss) or High Solid Gel (Matte) can be used. Formula #4 – 8 ounces Soft Gel (Semi-Gloss) to 4 drops Fluid Interference Blue (Fine) to 1 drop Fluid Iridescent Gold (Fine) to 6 drops of Fluid Interference Blue (Fine).



Any Matte or Semi-Gloss medium or Gel Medium can impart a waxy look. The specific manner in which it is applied can also increase or decrease this effect.





A couple of formulas to try are:

Formula #1 (Pourable) – 8 ounces of Soft Gel (Gloss) to 2 ounces Soft Gel (Matte) and add 6 ounces of water. Then add 16 drops of Fluid Interference Blue (Fine) to 4 drops Fluid Iridescent Gold (Fine).

Formula #2 (Pourable) – 8 ounces of Fluid Matte Medium to 4 drops of Fluid Iridescent Bright Gold (Fine).

Formula #3 – 8 ounces of Soft Gel (Matte) to 2 drops Fluid Naples Yellow Hue to 1 drop Fluid Quinacridone / Nickel Azo Gold to 2 drops of Fluid Interference Red (Fine).

Formula #4 – 8 ounces Soft Gel (Semi-Gloss) to 4 drops Fluid Interference Blue (Fine) to 1 drop Fluid Iridescent Gold (Fine).

Formula #5 – 8 ounces of High Solid Gel (Matte) to 1-3 drops of Fluid Quinacridone / Nickel Azo Gold to 6 drops of Fluid Interference Blue (Fine).

Some of these recipes come from Patti Brady's NorthLight Book, "Rethinking Acrylic: Radical Solutions for Exploiting the World's Most Versatile Medium".

Thank you to Scott Bennett and Golden Paints for some of this information.

## Cold Wax Medium

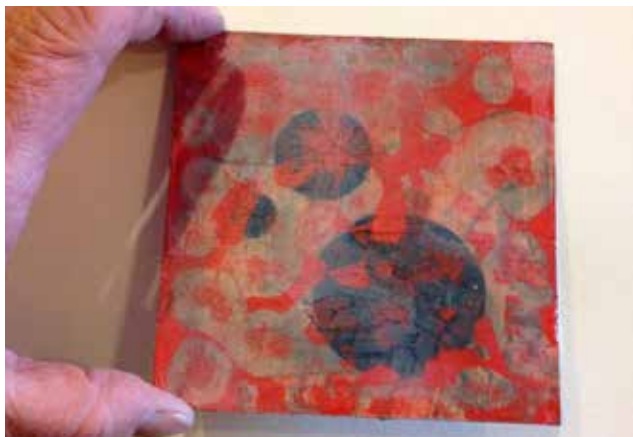
CWM is an oil paint medium compatible with paint sticks, powdered pigments, powdered charcoal and graphite, pastels, and other materials. Water soluble oils may be used, but the solvent-free aspect of these paints is lost since the wax itself contains solvent. It should not be mixed with water-based paints such as acrylics and watercolor but still can be used with used in 2D mixed media work on top of the acrylics and collage.

## Cold Wax Uses with Acrylics

Cold Wax may be used as a final coat for works on paper including watercolors, acrylics and photos, and as a finish on clay, plaster or wood works. It can be tinted with oil paints, scribed into, and paper ephemera can be collaged into it. Cold wax takes several days to be dry to the touch. **DO NOT USE ACRYLICS ON TOP OF THE WAX.**



Cold wax is found in the oil paints section of art stores.



Cold wax finish is flat & waxy.



Use oil paints to tint the cold wax.



Tinted cold wax can be scribed into.



Wax with graphite catches in underlying strokes.



Wax with glitter spreads beautifully on art surface.

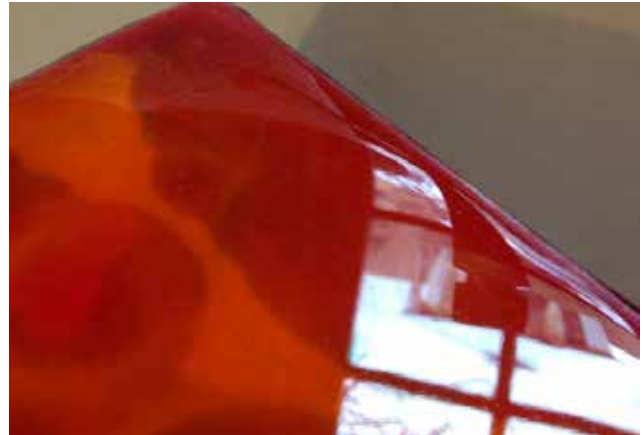
## Tip

This will take several days to feel dry to the touch. You can layer the cold wax and scrape through the layers. NEVER apply acrylics once the cold wax is on your surface.

Many artists will apply multiple layers, buffing the surface between each application.

## Resin

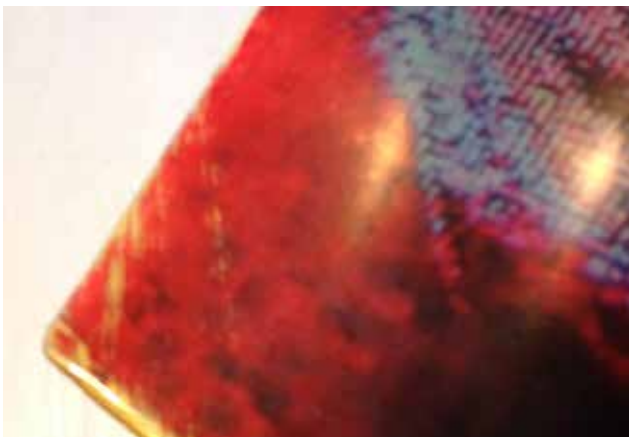
I prefer other medium to resin because of it's toxicity, life span and glare issues. Use a pouring resin (not a casting resin). Make sure you are in a well ventilated area, have a safety mask and follow all the instructions on the package. You will need a torch (a creme brulee torch works) to remove bubbles, a rubber brush or palette knife, a level, and plastic to protect your work surface. Place a box over the art after applying the resin to protect it from dust and bugs during the curing process.



Resin finish has a hard, very reflective surface.

## Tip

It is very important that your surface is level. Otherwise the resin will pool to one side. If working on a cradled panel, tape off the sides so you don't get permanent resin drips unless you like that look.



9 Resin sanded after curing leaves nice, thick matte look.



## Darlene Olivia McElroy

Darlene is a working artist, educator and art book author who has a touch of mad scientist in her. She loves exploring art surface techniques and sharing them with other artists around the world.

She a storyteller by birth and could never resist the power of paint to give vision to the tales floating in her imagination and asking to be told. Her richly layered work is about time, personal myths and the links that join the individual to the continuum of past, present, and future.

Darlene's art work is represented in galleries in the U.S. and Mexico. When she is not in her studio in Santa Fe, NM, surrounded by four studio dogs, you will find her teaching classes and workshops and writing art technique books for NorthLight. These are available on Amazon.

To see Darlene's art or sign up for her monthly newsletter full of studio news, tips and techniques, visit her web site: [darleneoliviamcelroy.com](http://darleneoliviamcelroy.com).



*Bellissima, 12" x 36" on panel*