

Three Irons 2 - Encaustic Computage - Leslye Bloom



Three Irons 2 started in an experimental encaustics workshop I taught. A participant, Craig Shaffer, took some wonderful photographs and shared them. Two shots of hand irons dripping wax (below left) sparked my imagination. I asked and he gave permission to use the images.

Two irons didn't seem to be enough, so I masked one and pasted in a demo encaustic (below right) from the same workshop. The fact that this pattern is impossible on a hot iron is a little embedded joke.

I cleaned up the table, added a background (bottom right,) and printed it in sections with my Tektronix-Xerox wax printer, then pieced it together. There was a red shift that I liked. Note the blue on the left iron below has become purple (left.)

To quiet the busy background, I added the bluish area of wax by hand. When I burned it in with a heat gun, some of the underlying wax migrated to the surface, making subtle variations (and the gradation to blue green.)

The composition seemed to need another horizontal, so I laid down some red wax on newspaper, tore off a strip and placed it at the top to pre-visualize, I liked it as it was so I fused the strip to the piece (heat, hold down and let cool.) I broke up the red manganese blue wax (upper left) When I added the white line it dripped - an unexpected circle that I liked. So I dripped some more at the top and create upwellings (white drop with red center) by spot-heating.

^ **Encaustics:** pigment bound by wax/damar medium. Heat it to mix and apply, cool it to set or fuse. It can be manipulated while warm.

Tranlucent wax makes even opaque pigments seem to glow. They are remarkably colorfast. Although encaustics *can* melt (over 200°F,) burn, or scratch, they can last centuries. Archival properties are excellent - the wax forms a barrier to air and pollutants. They can be shown without glazing, cleaned with mild soapy water, reheated and re-worked for years, and modeled in 3 dimensions.

Safety: Good ventilation, a fire extinguisher and hot pads are a must. Never use open flame. Smoke means it's overheated, and potentially dangerous pigments have been vaporized.

Tools can include: hand irons, brass brushes, electric griddles, tjanting tools, heat guns. Traditionally encaustics are put on gessoed, sanded board (or clayboard) substrates. I like paper so I can easily heat from back or front. Heavy impasto on paper *can* crack. Supplies and equipment can be expensive, but you can use good crayons and an old clothes iron (permanent press or lower setting) for first experiments.

Glossary

Items

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Print File



Source Photos: ©2004 Craig Shaffer