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Episode #2: Beeswax and Bok Choy

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The Art for Life Podcast from Gallery's Choice is a weekly program designed to inspire, educate and support the creative endeavors of others. Artist Rose Jarecki hosts and shares behind the scenes look at her life as an artist, insight into the work of a creative, and shares tips and stories from her 16 years in business. The Art for Life podcast series features: interviews with today's contemporary artists and art students; tutorials, tips and techniques; product reviews; and resources for those interested in art as a vocation or pass time. The show explores artists' techniques across a wide variety of media including drawing, painting, jewelry and all things art glass, and provides insight into living well as it serves to inspire and motivate the artist within all of us.

Host Lead in:

Are you looking for a way to artistically display some mementos from last summer's vacation? How about a painting collage? Or think scrap book page on a wall. Or maybe you are tired of traditional oil painting and want to go beyond Bob Ross and try something a little different this time, abstract maybe, impressionism or impasto, direct to canvas. If you've never tried painting with wax than listen this week's episode is for you. We are here to take you in a new dimension.

If I say the word "encaustic" chances are 90% of you won't know what I am talking about. Mention cold wax, and I may lose even more of you. Even if you are familiar with these art terms – would be able to describe the difference between them? Probably not.

Now if I say "oil painting" – most all of you will give me a nod of understanding. We are familiar with the masters' work in oils and have seen contemporary paintings in this medium.

Today we will explore the difference between hot and cold wax painting and discuss why you might enjoy exploring one vs. the other. In addition, I'll share my personal experiences learning about the exciting ways of incorporating bees wax with oil and other materials to take creativity to a new level. And if you've never tried it – painting with wax can be a bit intimidating. This episode is for you! We can demystify this amazing media and get you going...



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Lead in:

Welcome back to this week's episode of the Art for Life Podcast.

This week we are featuring Beeswax and Bok Choy.

- In this episode we will explain the difference between hot and cold wax paintings
- We will discuss how to use wax with your favorite other painting materials
- And introduce you to some simple crafty projects you'll be eager to try
- We will give you some practical tips how to choose your wax medium
- And how to get started on your own wax medium projects

Beeswax Painting History

I am going to start out by giving you a somewhat of a history lesson the basics of beeswax painting.

- For those of you who are new to wax-based painting, you can rest easy – as it has been around for thousands of years.
- The encaustic painting process is an ancient art form, actually. It was used in the tombs in Egypt dating from 900 BC. where wax was used to paint portraits of mummies. These so-called Fayum portraits are a testament to the durability of these art pieces as they exist to this day their unique imagery, the faces the colors, luminous and still well-preserved.
- Encaustic is a term derived from Greek meaning “burning in” and refers to the process of using heat to fuse in each layer of wax and pigment as the painting is being created.
- Now cold wax, as we know it today, purely defined as not using heat to fuse the painting layer by layer, and it is a more recent adjunct. It's only about 250 or 300 years old or so years old.
- This form of painting with wax in a cold mixture of solvent and oil is documented in the work of relatively contemporary abstract artist by the name of Arthur Dove. He created some abstract paintings back in the 1930's. He is also known as the father of American Abstract painting, and so he shed new light on working with wax, and his popularity fueled interest in cold wax formulation.
- Initially this (cold wax medium) was produced as a way to protect and restore paintings. The first formulation of a cold wax medium, as we know it, was Dorland's Wax Medium. And he made that, Frank Dorland, in 1947. This paved the way for newer formulations of a cold wax as artists began to use it more widely, more widely as a medium to mix in with their paint, not just as part of the restoration process.



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- The benefit of the cold wax medium for oil paints was discovered in decreasing of the “drying time,” or what was thought to be the “drying time”, and overall increased body of the mixture, which stretched pigment and added texture.
- One note about this “drying time” thing: In the world of oil painting and wax, nothing really dries. The solvents in the mixtures that evaporate, and the oil hardens or “cures”, just like a traditional oil painting, over time.

Wax Medium Properties

- In addition to the benefit of this decreased drying time or the ability of an artist to go back and be able to work into it quicker, unrefined bees wax is a natural and renewable resource
- It has a melting point of around 150 degrees F (higher than paraffin 115 – 145), it remains stable in most environments. This kind of answers the question that most people ask about wax paintings, it’s like: “Well, but isn’t it gonna melt on my wall?” So, the answer is: “No. But if it gets over 150 degrees where you are staying, you probably have got other problems than the painting melting.”
- Beeswax remains tough, yet flexible over time
- And it adheres well to a lot of different sub-straights. Not canvas, it doesn’t like to flex that much but paper, wood, and other things. It really has a gripping ability.
- It’s water resistant.
- And also, it is a natural preservative.
- Bees wax can be used as an oil painting additive, or as a medium for carrying pigment itself, in encaustic (hot) or cold wax techniques
- It is translucent (it lets light through) and therefore allows for a sense of depth through layering and it is thick enough to hold and encapsulate other artistic elements.
- For encaustic base, Bees wax is mixed with Damar Resin (not Varnish). This base can then incorporate pigments to create encaustic paints.
- For cold wax, bees wax is mixed with some sort of solvent (either odorless mineral spirits, turpentine, or pure d-limonene – a natural citrus solvent) and may also contain small amounts of linseed or stand oil, damar resin, or other waxes.
- As I was doing my research I noticed that there were many recipes for cold wax medium, as there are artists working in the medium; and each tweaking, adding and experimenting a little bit to get the preferred consistency that they want for their use in their particular work.
- Unfortunately, I’m not going to be able to do a deep dive in any one of these mediums here, just as time will not allow. But stay tuned as these topics will be topics of future episodes and I will dedicate time to both encaustic painting and to cold wax painting in the future so, be sure to



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<GC Lavender Body Butter>

Hey kids, Mr. Bill here. So I was a busy bee out in the studio today cutting glass, and when I came back in to grab some lunch, I noticed how damaged my knuckles are. As glass artists, we're in water all the time. Add the occasional scrapes and the cold winter weather, and my knuckles have been thru the meat grinder. What's a guy to do?

I reach for our own GC Lavender Body Butter. It's soothing and healing.

GC Lavender Body Butter is beeswax based, giving your hands a coat of protection while it heals, and it will stay where you put it. It also contains vitamin E for healing, shea butter for softness, and that great lavender scent

As with all our lavender goodies, we grow our own lavender here on our farm in north central Illinois, and we make our own products. GC Lavender Body Butter is great for knuckles, heels, elbows and knees. I've also heard its great for runners to avoid chafing in those tender areas.

Pick up a tin at our Downers Grove Gallery or online at GC Lavender DOT COM. GC Lavender - part of the GC family of products.

Encaustic vs. Cold Wax Comparison

- SO, what is the difference between painting cold or hot (encaustic) using bees wax?
- Well, encaustic means, as I said before, a burning in, and refers to the part of the technique which requires the use of heat (either by torch or heat gun) to liquify each layer enabling it to physically fuse to the other layers below it. As this procedure is performed, the art changes. This added an element of happy accident mystery to the work may be welcome or not welcome. Sometimes the heat, from my perspective, allows pigment to escape an area and spread (maybe where I didn't want it to go!). This kind of work (and not unlike some of my silk paintings) demands the artist be open to Wabi-Sabi theory, and to be ok with not controlling everything. You have got to be ok with not controlling everything! Ok, so, think of yourself. If you are a Type A personality, you may want to go a different direction.
- But, at the same time, the loss of control is very expressive and very freeing and can appeal to artists wanting to channel emotions and color, rather than directing it.
- The work surface in an encaustic hot wax surface, can be buffed to a high shine (almost glass-like) and it can hold texture. So it can go from flat to sculptural in depth.



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- With encaustics, the rich translucent medium allows for embedding and incorporation of other media: encapsulation of pictures, organic materials and mementos. This allows the artists to creatively explore multi-media imagery, such as popular collage techniques. When we talk about encaustic painting and you look through galleries and see some of the beautiful sculptural work that people have produces, it's awesome. You know, painting over wood blocks, making three-dimensional pieces that are stand-alone sculptures - in their own right. Or cutting back and incusing through layers to reveal something underneath that is a solid piece. And just something that is just the way the colors play using this medium. It's very fascinating.
- Initial set up for encaustics can be a bit daunting, however. Our local art supply store has a few nice starter kit options, but with the price points between \$550 to \$650 at the time of this recording, I think that might be a bit off-putting to invest in if you aren't already familiar with the medium. And while there are ways to build your own studio set up less expensively, it can be frustrating if you aren't familiar with how this process works. So, my sage advice - TAKE A CLASS AND THEN DECIDE!!!! And we, at Gallery's Choice, can get you started! Once you have fallen in love with the medium, you can invest with confidence. And you'll know how far you want to go with it.

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<Gallery's Choice Wax Painting Class>

Hey kids, Mr. Bill here. If you like what you're hearing and want to give it a try, it's time to jump into the game. At Gallery's Choice in Downers Grove, Illinois, you can take this class and many others. Come join us in suburban Chicago and enjoy small class sizes in our gallery!

For best success, we suggest you start with a basic oil painting class, followed by the encaustic or cold wax – or both! The start with oils gives you the base information while painting through various projects with pallet knife and brushes – both of which you'll need for a successful start to painting with wax.

Contact us to find a weekday, evening or Saturday class that works best for you. To double the fun, bring a friend or two!

Find more info online at GalleriesChoice.com, send an email to [ART @ GalleriesChoice.com](mailto:ART@GalleriesChoice.com), or go old school with a call to 630-969-5660.

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- Now, cold wax is a different experience. It is a painting medium at its most basic, it can simply be added to traditional and familiar oil paint to allow for richly applied impasto or painterly brush work where pallet knife or brush strokes stand out in relief. This is what first attracted me to this cold wax medium.
- Cold wax surfaces have a unique velvety finish. So it's matte. And this matte surface is in contrast to the more glossy natural oil paint alone or the high gloss of the encaustic hot wax techniques. I find that soft, matte finish to be very soothing – it has mood to it.
- If there is one advantage to cold wax, that I see as a teaching professional as well as an artist, is in its accessibility over encaustic work. No heating needed, no fumes to worry about (unless you are creating your own cold wax medium, which we will talk about in another episode).
- But a beginners' cold wax studio leverages a lot of existing tools and materials, and for the most part and with some inexpensive additions and set up, you are off and running!
- I will provide a Cold Wax materials short list on our site with a link to it from this episodes' show notes for you. A little beginner cold wax studio check list if you want to take a look and play.
- But like encaustic, cold wax can be used to create depth that comes with use of multiple layers applied over the artwork.
- Now, If you are looking for visuals, (and I understand that this audio show has some limitations!) check out our web site GallerysChoice.com. Or check out the show notes that are linked to this podcast, and I will have a link to some visuals so you can check out the look and judge for yourself.
- Now I always get asked this question: How do I figure out which one to do, I mean with encaustics, playing with fire sounds might exciting...Or do I want to do the cold wax thing, cause that sounds awesome also. Well, here's my suggestion:
- If you haven't tried painting with wax and are wondering where to start, my suggestion is to find the form of painting you like the most. Observe the art and artworks of other artists, go to some galleries, take a walk, do a Google search on the internet, look at what other artists have produced in those mediums, and find what draws you to it. This is the same advice I give to would-be painting students who walk into our gallery and are trying to figure out if they want to pursue watercolor or oils or do I start in acrylics. Take a walk through your local art gallery or art fair and see which pieces draw you in. Is it the vibrance of color that you're attracted to, or something very subtle and soft that is attracting you to it. Does the high contrast intrigue you? Or are you always drawn to those works that are soft and matte finish? What ever it is, you will be able to move forward with passion.
- What I don't like is when people make the decision based on some other reason. They want to take something, but its, you know, a dollar more expensive. Or they perceive that it's harder to achieve so they so not pursue that medium. That is the wrong reason. If you have passion for something you're going to better at it, so even if the medium is a little harder to master in the



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beginning, if you truly are drawn to it and have passion for that medium, that is the one you should pursue.

- So, this part is done. And again, if Gallery's Choice, or if I, can help you get started in either cold wax or encaustic painting, we would love to. Check out our website at GalleriesChoice.com and check out and subscribe please to this Art for Life Podcast.

Are You Hungry?

- I don't know about you, but painting all day in my studio generates quite an appetite, and as I don't want to wind up being the subject of one of those Fayum mummy portraits, I think it's time to fuel the stove...
- This week in my quest to increase what I will call "food literacy" among the masses - to help you all live better and healthier, we are going to explore Bok Choy!
- At the time of this writing, Bok Choy, a member of the cruciferous family of vegetables, ranks as one of the world's healthiest foods (at least on one health-oriented website) due in part to phenols and other phytonutrients in this vegetable known to have anti-cancer-causing benefits to the body. Just like broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and Brussel sprouts this plant has a mighty list of good for you nutrients like Vitamin K, A, C along with Omega-3s. And it's antioxidant richness has made it a star player.
- And maybe best of all – it's a cabbage that doesn't just taste like a cabbage. You know what I mean, right? And I like cabbage, but sometimes – ya know – that broccoli just is, well – overwhelming.
- Bok Choy, and more specifically today we are going to be using Baby Bok Choy, it is so sweet and crunchy that is can easily be incorporated to soups and salads for its crisp, but not too stringy texture and soft sweet flavor.
- Today we are going to feature this vegetable in a super simple knock-you-socks off stir-fry, with garlic and SURPRISE: GCLavender Candied Ginger!

Oh Baby! Bok Choy Stir Fry

- So here we go. So easy – and so quick: a vegetarian side dish to accompany any week-night fare.
- Take 10 oz or so of Baby bok choy or regular bok choy, (if you can't find the Baby Bok Choy, don't worry about it) if the smaller ones aren't available. Separate the stalks and wash the leaves well. Dry them and chop into 1-inch diagonal pieces. Separate the leafy parts from the stemmy parts, as the secret to making this to a great texture is to put these in at different times so you do not over-cook the tender thin leafy parts while you are trying to get the stems tender. (shout out for this helpful tip from Chef John's Garlic Bok Choy recipe on All Recipes) He did that in his dish and I thought, What a great idea, why didn't I think of it!



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- Start by easing the garlic and red pepper into the olive oil and getting fragrant before adding ginger and stems of bok choy. (Stems only, right.) Sauté this for about 5 minutes covered until the bok choy is getting translucent on the edges. Then add the broth and leafy portions, with the soy sauce and a squeeze of lemon juice.
- Now I like to use a no soy lower sodium version of “soy sauce” whenever I can, so go ahead and use your favorite soy sauce substitute.
- And yes, this recipe uses GC Lavender Candied Ginger as one component in it’s flavor base! Don’t worry, if you don’t have any (click the link on the show notes and go get some!) you can use fresh grated ginger or even ground ginger from your spice cabinet.
- Also, I like to add lemon juice or zest into greens to brighten flavors and reduce any bitterness. Although in this recipe – there is no bitter – so let’s just say I love lemons!
- The last step you are cooking this uncovered about 5 -10 minutes, until tender.
- Serve!
- Hope you enjoyed this weeks’ Art for Life Podcast Episode. Please subscribe and also please check out our show notes for useful links to our web site and for other resources we compiled just for you!
- It’s been a pleasure to serve and I hope to be with you next time!

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