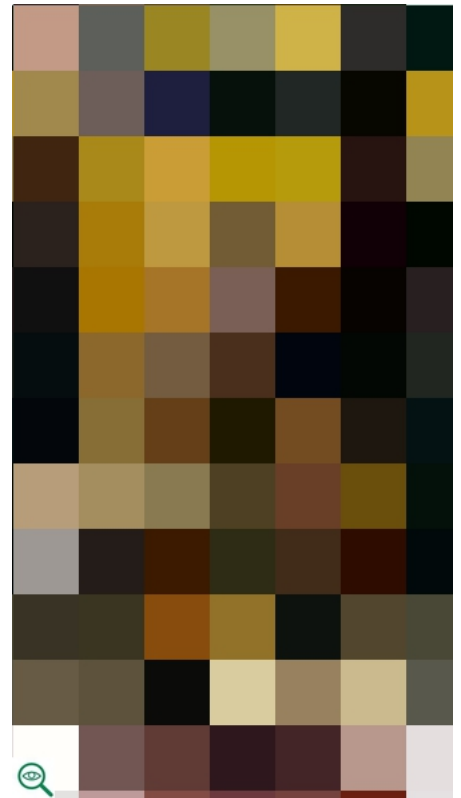


Encaustic painting

Encaustic painting, also known as **hot wax painting**, involves using heated beeswax to which colored pigments are added. The liquid or paste is then applied to a surface—usually prepared wood, though canvas and other materials are often used. The simplest encaustic mixture can be made from adding pigments to beeswax, but there are several other recipes that can be used—some containing other types of waxes, damar resin, linseed oil, or other ingredients. Pure, powdered pigments can be used, though some mixtures use oil paints or other forms of pigment.^[1]

Metal tools and special brushes can be used to shape the paint before it cools, or heated metal tools can be used to manipulate the wax once it has cooled onto the surface. Today, tools such as heat lamps, heat guns, and other methods of applying heat allow artists to extend the amount of time they have to work with the material. Because wax is used as the pigment binder, encaustics can be sculpted as well as painted. Other materials can be encased or collaged into the surface, or layered, using the encaustic medium to stick them to the surface.



A 6th-century encaustic icon from Saint Catherine's Monastery, Egypt.

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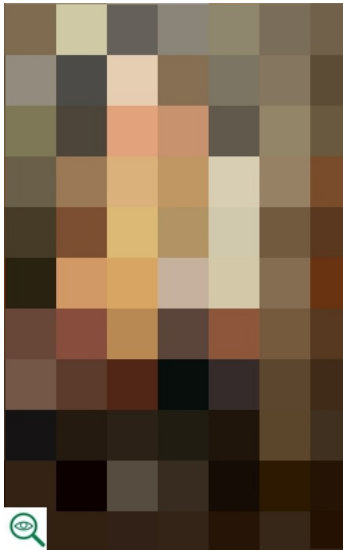
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History

The word encaustic originates from the Greek word *enkaustikos*^[2] which means to burn in, and this element of heat is necessary for a painting to be called encaustic.

This technique was notably used in the Fayum mummy portraits from Egypt around 100–300 AD, in the Blachernitissa and other early icons, as well as in many works of 20th-century North American artists, including Jasper Johns, Tony Scherman, Mark Perlman, and Fernando Leal Audirac. Kut-kut, a lost art of the Philippines, employs sgraffito and encaustic techniques. It was practiced by the indigenous tribe of Samar island around 1600 to 1800.^[3] Artists in the Mexican muralism movement, such as Diego Rivera^[4] and Jean Charlot^[5] sometimes used encaustic painting. The Belgian artist James Ensor also experimented with encaustic.^[6]

The wax encaustic painting technique was described by the Roman scholar Pliny the Elder in his *Natural History* from the 1st Century AD.^[7] The oldest surviving encaustic panel paintings are the Romano-Egyptian Fayum mummy portraits from the 1st Century BC.^[8]



Fayum mummy portrait

In the 20th century, painter [Fritz Faiss](#) (1905–1981), a student of [Paul Klee](#) and [Wassily Kandinsky](#) at the [Bauhaus](#), together with Dr. Hans Schmid, rediscovered the so-called "Punic wax" technique of encaustic painting. Faiss held two German patents related to the preparation of waxes for encaustic painting. One covered a method for treating beeswax so that its melting point was raised from 60 to 100 °C (140 to 212 °F). This occurred after boiling the wax in a solution of sea water and soda three successive times. The resulting harder wax is the same as the Punic wax referred to in ancient Greek

writings on encaustic painting.^{[9][10]}

Encaustic art has seen a resurgence in popularity since the 1990s with people using electric irons, hotplates and heated styli on different surfaces including card, paper and even pottery. The iron makes producing a variety of artistic patterns easier. The medium is not limited to just simple designs; it can be used to create complex paintings, just as in other media such as [oil](#) and [acrylic](#).^[11] Although technically difficult to master, attractions of this medium for contemporary artists are its dimensional quality and luminous color.^[12]

Encaustic painters

Artists specializing in encaustic painting include the following.

[Benjamin Calau](#) · [Rodney Carswell](#) · [Pedro Cuni-Bravo](#) · [Michael David](#) · [Christel Dillbohner](#) · [Thomas Dodd](#) · [Betsy Eby](#) · [Fritz Faiss](#) · [Esther Geller](#) · [Heraclides](#) · [Jasper Johns](#) · [Christopher Kier](#) · [John K. Lawson](#) · [Pausias](#) · [Michele Ridolfi](#) · [Jenny Sages](#) · [Tony Scherman](#) · [Janise Yntema](#) · [Karl Zerbe](#)

See also

- [Encaustic tile](#)

Notes and references

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- ↑ "Encaustic", *The Oxford American Dictionary*
- ↑ . *ABS-CBN News*. 5 March 2008. Retrieved 2016-06-09.
- ↑ . Archived from the original on May 13, 2011. Retrieved 2011-05-13.
- ↑ *Charlot 1998*.
- ↑ "Fireworks", 1887, James Ensor (see "James Ensor" MoMA, New York, 2009)
- ↑ *Pliny the Elder 1885*, Book 35, ch 41.



The Mummy of Demetrios, 95-100 C.E., 11.600a-b, Brooklyn Museum

*Autumn Leaf* encaustic painting by Mitzi Humphrey

8. [Doxiadis 1995](#), p. 193.
9. Reams, Maxine (October 19, 1952). "Unique Wax Paintings by Immigrant Artist Should Endure 10,000 Years". *Los Angeles Times*. G14.
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External links

- [Early Icons from St. Catherine's, The Sinai](http://campus.belmont.edu/honors/Sinailcons/Sinailcons.html) (<http://campus.belmont.edu/honors/Sinailcons/Sinailcons.html>)
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