INTRODUCTION
Encaustic painting, also known as hot wax painting, involves using heated beeswax to which colored pigments are added. The liquid/paste is then applied to a surface — usually prepared wood, though canvas and other materials are often used. 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 adhere it to the surface.

This technique was notably used in the Fayum mummy portraits from Egypt around 100-300 AD, as well as in many works of 20th century North American artists, including Jasper Johns, Tony Scherman, and Fernando Leal Auldric. Artists in the Mexican muralism movement, such as Diego Rivera and Jean Charlot, sometimes used encaustic painting (Wikipedia).

STANDARDS
Content Standard #1: Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes 9-12 — Students conceive and create works of visual art that demonstrate an understanding of how the communication of their ideas relates to the media, techniques, and processes they use.

Content Standard #2: Using knowledge of structures and functions 9-12 — Students demonstrate the ability to form and defend judgments about the characteristics and structures to accomplish commercial, personal, communal, or other purposes of art.

Content Standard #3: Choosing and evaluating a range of subject matter, symbols, and ideas 9-12 — Students reflect on how artworks differ visually, spatially, temporally, and functionally, and describe how these are related to history and culture

Content Standard #4: Understanding the visual arts in relation to history and culture 9-12 — Students differentiate among a variety of historical and cultural contexts in terms of characteristics and purposes of works of art.

VOCABULARY
Encaustic – to burn
Heat gun – used to fuse wax to board and fuse wax between layers
Fuse – to heat the wax until it melts with layer below
Pigment – color added to beeswax
Choose a pattern or design by looking through books or the Internet for a variety of subjects. Often encaustic art is abstract, but it does not have to be. Creating a painting will take more time and patience.

1. Make a black and white copy, sized to fit the board.

2. Cut out the pattern and glue firmly to the board. Make sure there are no air bubbles! Another option is to use a gessoed board, or coat a board with encaustic gesso this is made to work with the encaustic wax.

3. Let dry overnight.

INSTRUCTIONS

4. Heat colored wax and medium (180°-190° F). Set heating plate at medium until it reaches 180° F, then set to low, using the thermometer to monitor the temperature. You may have to adjust to keep the wax melted.

5. Maneuver the heat gun in a circular motion to heat the pattern until the board is warm to the touch.

6. Fill the flat brush with encaustic medium and stroke from left to right over the pattern to coat it. Repeat until the board is covered with a thin layer.
On a low setting, use the heat gun in a circular motion to heat wax until glistening. Be sure to keep the heat gun close to but not touching the wax. This fuses the wax to the board.

Keeping the temperature between 180°-200° F, melt the colored wax. Always pay attention to the temperature and what is happening with the wax. If wax steams, it is a good indication that wax is too hot.

Paint your pattern using paintbrushes. Keep one brush for each color so you don’t contaminate colors. Other tools can be used to apply the wax, especially for abstract patterns. Brushes may need to be warmed on plate to stay pliable.

After each layer, apply a coat of medium to fuse with colors. This gives the layered look that encaustic is known for. This is a different experience than using oil or acrylic paints. It will take time and practice. The best way to see the difficulty is to try it.

To clean the encaustic palette, turn off and wipe wax off with a paper towel or cotton cloth. Be extremely careful as the wax will still be hot. Brushes can be cleaned by heating soy wax and moving brush into the wax, wiping off excess, and repeating until brush is clean. Once used for encaustics, brushes should be only used for this medium. The brushes will have a stiff feel once cooled, but will soften when heated again.
MATERIALS LIST

- Encaustic Studio Essentials Kit — 9742442
- Encaustic Opaque Colors, set of six — 9731558
- Encaustic Gesso, gallon — 9731559
- Flat/Round Assortment, 144 Brushes — 9723569
- Hardboard Panels, 5” x 7”, 6” x 6”, 8” x 10”, 9” x 12 — 9732087, 9732088, 9732090, 9732092