

# Encaustic with a Textile Sensibility

**DANIELLA WOOLF**

Sample eBook

**WORKSHOP COMPANION eBook**





“Encaustic with a Textile Sensibility”  
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Written by Daniella Woolf and Andrew Galli  
Compiled by Bob Forrester

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# Encaustic with a Textile Sensibility

Workshop Companion  
to the Online Edition

Written by

Daniella Woolf  
and Andrew Galli



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Line and Edge

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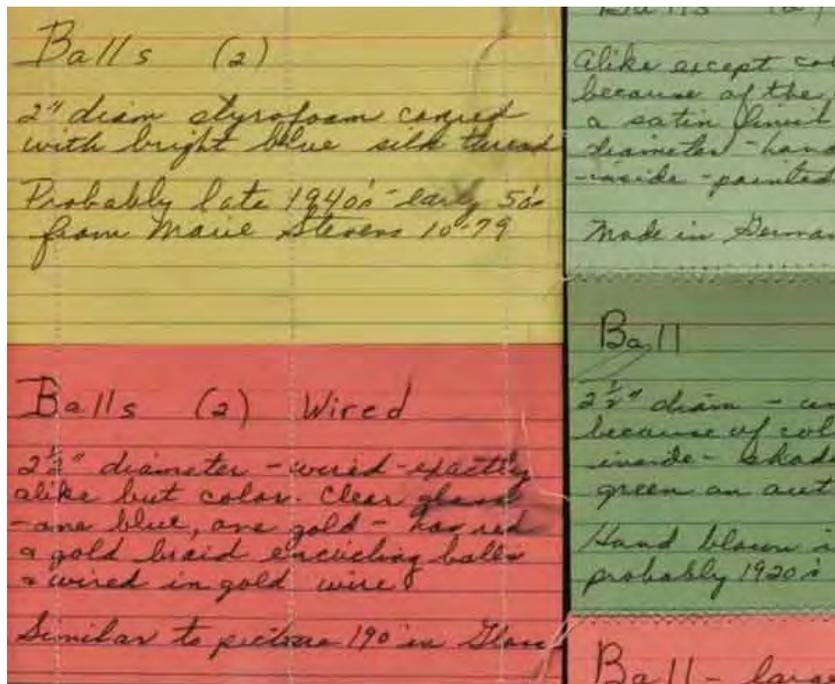
## RESOURCES FOR ENCAUSTIC

Please see the file "Encaustic Resources.pdf" for a listing of all the books, suppliers and other websites mentioned in this workshop.

# INTRODUCTION



# Stitched, Dipped and Waxed



"Favorite Things" detail, stitched 3"x5" cards in Encaustic wax.

It's not enough for me as an encaustic artist to simply work with wax. I know for many people -- just having a few wood panels on hand, some clear and colored wax, and they have what they need to get started.

You will see as we move forward in this workshop that inasmuch as wood panels are an important part of the process, they are just one item at your disposal to work from. There are in fact many more things you can work on, and we will be looking at a variety of these as we spend the next several hours together exploring encaustic wax.

## Preserving Memories and Events in Wax

Art provides the opportunity to find something out of loss. It is a way of honoring an emotion or idea or person, preserving them in the media of choice. For me it is encaustic wax, which preserves just about everything you dip in it.

When my mother passed away, I decided to work with some of her things as a way of reconciling my emotions and feelings regarding my loss. My mother was one of those people who didn't throw things away.

*Mom's Recipes - pinned to a wall, organized for my work.*

Coming home from school I remember seeing my mom at the kitchen table balancing her checkbook, and storing checks in a long box, numerically.

Why did we keep things for so long back then?



Does anybody keep checks these days?

I am sure she knew that they would be important one day, and she was right. After she passed away, I went to her home and found boxes of canceled checks, hand-written address-cards in vintage Rolodex rotary systems, pads from motels and hotels that became ad hoc recipe cards. Each was part of a lifetime of checks and balances, a way of organizing things and people long before the invention of the iPhone.

I took those things back with me in my car and drove up Interstate 5 to the 101 and followed the coastal route back to my home in Santa Cruz. Along the way my mind started exploring what I might do with these mementos of a long life well lived; it seemed appropriate that they would end up in wax one day.



*Detail, "Just Checking", Stitched Canceled Checks in Encaustic Wax*

And so they did.

I brought the checks out, and began exploring by cutting them up. First I was fascinated by how accurate her signature was, and later on I was cutting them up more randomly. I used a roll of drywall tape which has adhesive on one side, and stuck the checks to the tape in long strips. I fed my tapes through a sewing machine and stitched them so they would be permanently attached. Finally, I dipped the long tapes into a pot of clear encaustic wax and hung them to dry.

They immediately became translucent, the ballpoint pen signatures my mother crafted on each check became saturated and boldly stood out against the pale pink, green and blue papers.



*Just Checking by Daniella Woolf, 2010.  
Sewn handwritten bank checks and beeswax. 72" x 96" x 2"*

In 2009 I was invited to teach at the Surface Design Association Conference being held in Kansas City, Missouri. I put the piece "Just Checking" on display in an old warehouse turned into gallery space, and got the call! The Bank of Missouri loved it, and decided to purchase it for the lobby of their bank headquarters in Kansas City.

And just like that -- mom's canceled checks, lovingly stitched and dipped, were on permanent display in middle America, a reflection of a time when we all wrote and kept our checks, when our choices were limited to pastel green, blue, yellow or pink.

I wonder what a child thinks when they enter the bank today with their parents, and say, "Mommy, what's that?"

And the mom says, " oh wow -- we used to have to write out every check before we could tap our phones".

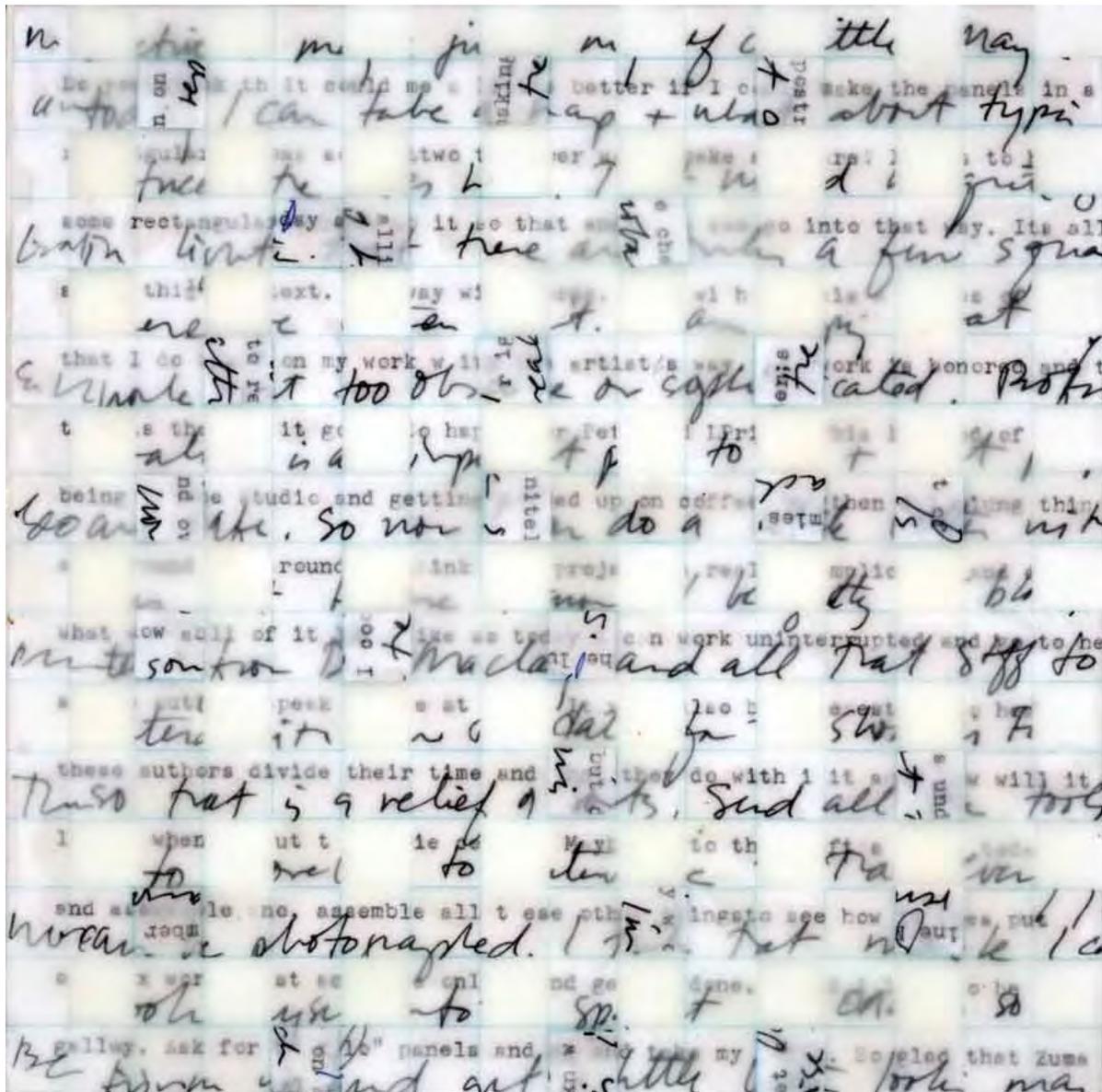
And the kid says, "you're kidding!"

## *Encaustic with a Textile Sensibility*

The idea for producing a series of educational videos on Encaustic came after a conversation with Andrew Galli who had been hired to film artists and highlights at the SDA Conference in Kansas City. I had the chance to observe his production style and decided it was time to explore my work as a teacher in video. [Here's a segment](#) of the learning DVD from that initial encounter.

I came up with the title, "Encaustic with a Textile Sensibility" because of all of the interwoven elements I had been working on in my studio. Pieces of paper, cards, and even leaves found in nature can be hand or machine stitched, interwoven and preserved in wax.

The result is something entirely new, hardly resembling the former, but a derivative nonetheless.



"True Grid", interwoven sliced morning pages in encaustic wax.

And so that's what this workshop is all about. Working traditionally on panels but as well working on the palette and in a pot of wax, exploring a variety of elements and really getting a broad understanding of Encaustic Art.



*Contact Lens cases donated by a charitable neighbor...*

We will explore a variety of porous surfaces -- leaves found in nature, cardboard, and other elements will make their way into our projects, quite often with surprisingly delightful results.

I will be asking you to dive into your drawers, attics and cupboards, look through piles of magazines, and even the neighbor's junk that has been bothering you all this time.

Perhaps your friends and neighbors will begin to leave things for you to use at your door. Buckets of rubber bands, disposable contact lens packaging, and many other strange objects have found their way to mine. Some will end up in wax!

*"Yours, Mine and Ours"*  
Sewn paper, photos, blueprints and  
"encausticated".  
30" diameter x 30 feet tall.  
Daniella Woolf, 2009



By the time we are done working together, you will have gained a wonderful perspective on Encaustic art, free from the usual expectations, loaded with ideas for what to do next!



## Watch ▶ ‘Where it All Begins’



# Enkaustikos: To Burn In



*Fayum Mummy Portrait, 300 A.D.*

The word Encaustic derives from the Greek word enkaustikos, meaning to "burn in". The Greeks and the Romans used beeswax and pitch to waterproof and preserve the hulls of their ships.

Egyptian [Fayum Portraits](#) are one of the earliest recorded examples of encaustic paintings being preserved under wax on coffins in tombs, still retaining their lustre and beauty today.

*Beeswax and Damar Resin are filtered to produce encaustic medium.*

Encaustic medium as we use it today in encaustic painting is a combination of natural amber or mechanically filtered beeswax and Damar resin in a ratio of 9 parts beeswax to 2 parts Damar resin . This is a standard ratio-more Damar resin makes the medium harder.





*A Pen Tool with Assorted Nibs is a "must have".*

When it comes time to set up your Encaustic studio, there are many options available from many suppliers. Have a look at the Resources Guide at the end of PART THREE for a linked list of suppliers who can provide the variety of tools and

materials you will need for your Encaustic projects.

*A Variety of Supports & Grounds are Available for your projects.*

A variety of Supports and Grounds are available for encaustic projects. Everything from paper to fibrous materials can be stitched, painted, cut up, rubbed on or transferred to a paper or prepared panel. Some more interesting applications include this cardboard shoe

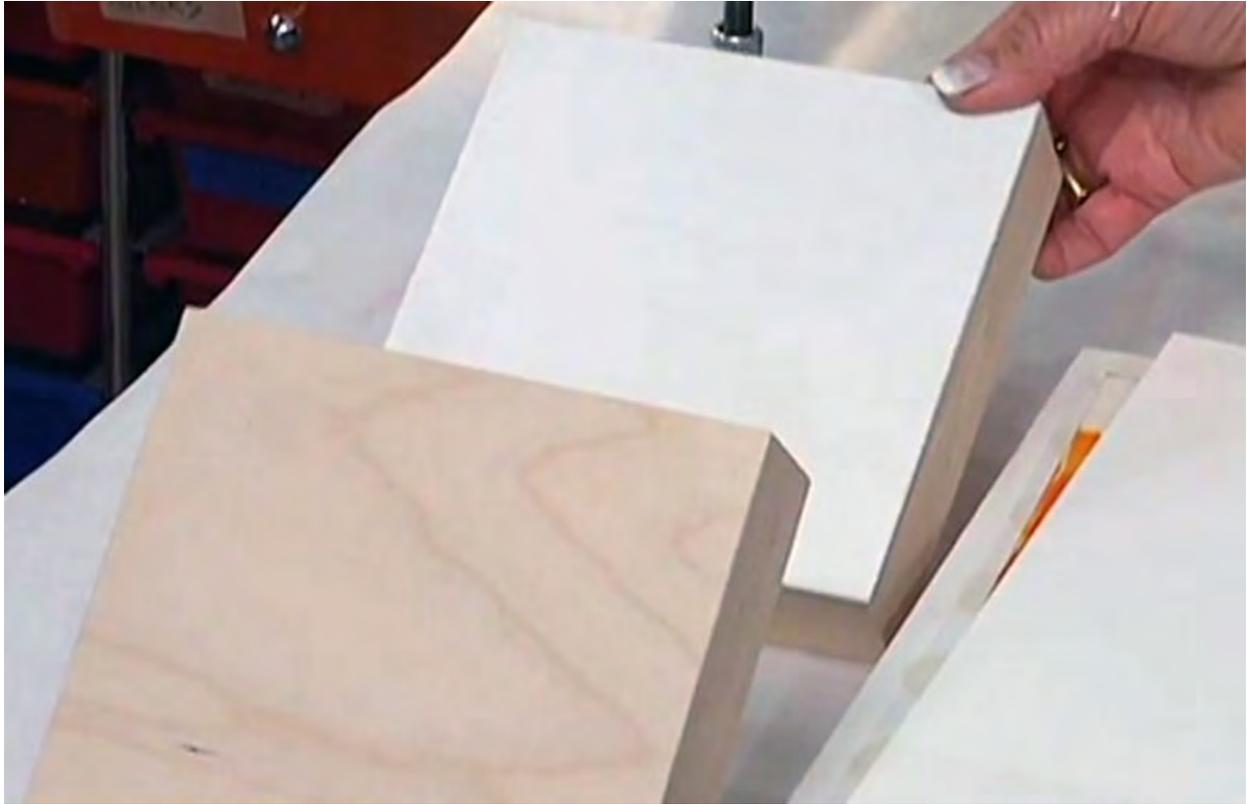


insert which is stiff enough to support the material. To insure you have a porous ground on which to paint, you may want to apply encaustic gesso to your surfaces before you apply any encaustic medium.

# PART ONE



## Watch ▶ 'Supports and Grounds'



## Watch ▶ 'Sizing A Panel'



# Project: Sizing an Encaustic Panel

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*Daniella in her Studio*

Having some sized panels ready to go in your studio will allow you to jump into a project spontaneously. I suggest that you have both Beeswax and Encaustic medium available in your studio. If you are working 18" x 18" or larger, good studio practice is to use beeswax for your first coat for sizing your panel. It is much less expensive than encaustic medium. If you need help sourcing

Encaustic supplies, many suppliers are available for all your needs. Please view the Resources Guide in PART THREE for links to online shops where you can buy materials used in this video workshop.

## Starting the Project

*Hot Pot with Wax  
heated to 200°F*

### 1 | Heat Wax to 200°F (93°C)

Use a thermostatically controlled wax pot, skillet, or tray on heated palette. Have some split shank Hake brushes or other natural bristle brushes on hand for applying the wax to panels.



*Wax applied to 1/2 of a wood  
panel brings the grain forward.*

### 2 | Apply Wax to Plain and Gesso'd Panels

I like to work on both plain (natural wood) panels as well as encaustic gesso'd panels in my studio. Encaustic



gesso provides beautiful white ground.

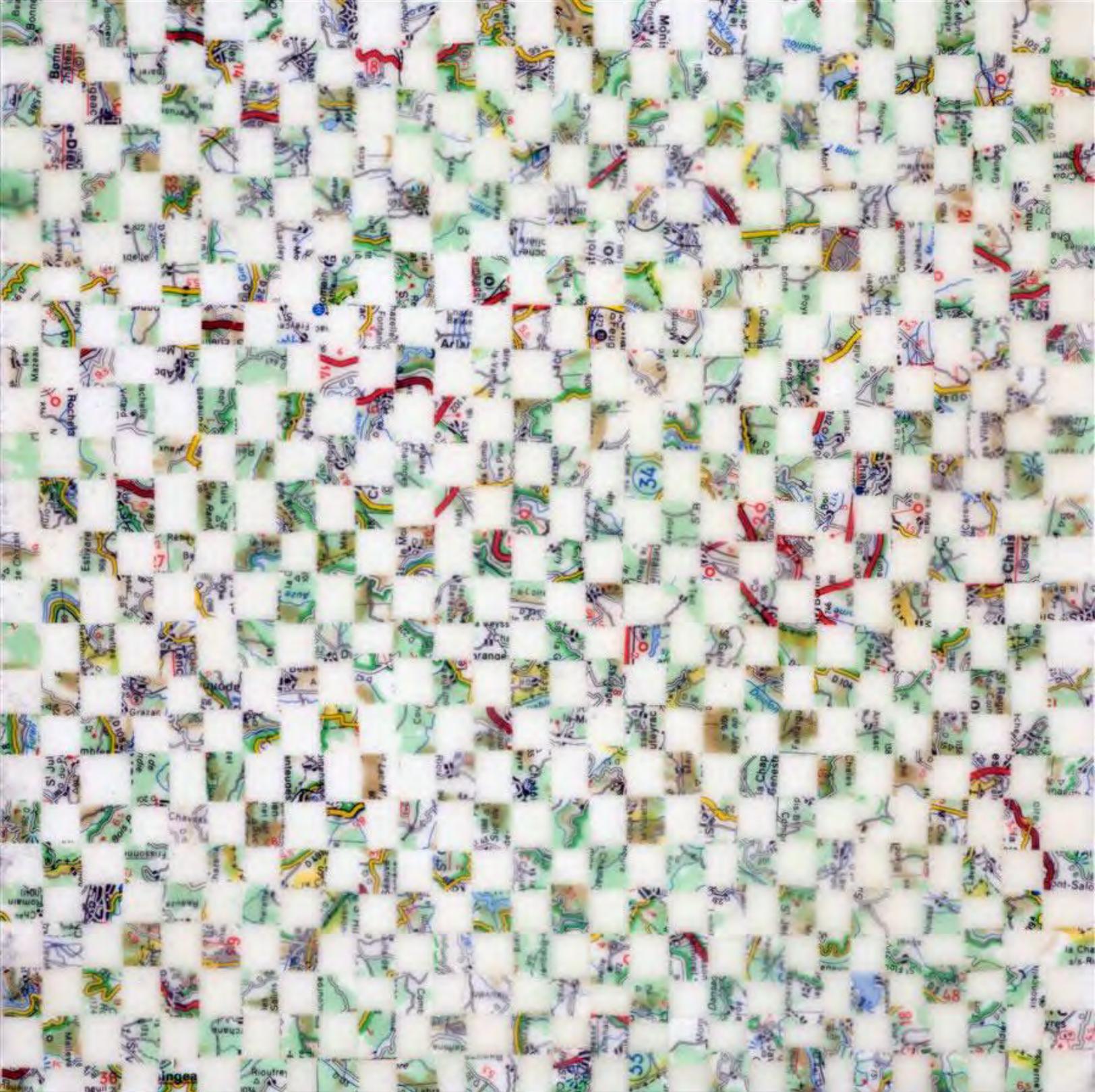
Sometimes I prefer the grain and natural wood color, sometimes I prefer a white ground, mostly when I am painting with color, because a white ground enhances the color of the paint.

Experiment by applying the wax to a variety of panels which you can then use throughout this video workshop and your further explorations.



## Watch ▶ 'Achieving A White Ground'





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