wabi-sabi
ART WORKSHOP

MIXED MEDIA TECHNIQUES
for EMBRACING IMPERFECTION and
CELEBRATING HAPPY ACCIDENTS

EXCLUSIVE ONLINE BONUS CONTENT

serena BARTON

NORTH LIGHT BOOKS
Cincinnati, Ohio
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Companion to Chapter 1: Acrylic Paint and Re-inkers

I love alcohol inks because they are beautiful and also because they are unpredictable. I never know exactly what effect I'll get with them, though the results are usually more wonderful than I imagine. You don't have to use glaze medium with the alcohol inks and they dry fairly quickly if you don't put them on thickly. You can also blot the ink for interesting effects and to hasten drying. I like to drop the inks onto the support and see how they land. I often add another set of drops after the first set has dried. Alcohol inks are transparent and cover unevenly. The ink moves and spreads after you drop it and it's fun to watch this process. (Who says watching paint dry is boring?) For maximum spread, apply the alcohol ink onto wet paint or glaze. If you want to add the alcohol ink after your paint has dried, brush some glaze medium over the desired area before adding the alcohol ink. In the project below, I use the inks to create a row of trees. Again, I learned to do this by accident some time ago. I was experimenting with the inks on a piece and dropped some in a row across the support. Voilà, trees.
1. Start with a gessoed support. Use Buff acrylic paint to cover the entire surface. I mixed the Buff with gel medium and created swirls and random patterns on the panel.

2. When the Buff layer is dry, paint pastel yellow acrylic paint on the top third of the panel. Using a paper towel rub the paint into and off the panel.

3. Brush on layers of Butterscotch re-inker.

4. When the Butterscotch layer is dry, squeeze drops of Stream alcohol ink in a row about a third of the way down to resemble trees.

5. Brush in the alcohol ink a little and blot as desired.

6. Drop Watermelon alcohol ink in a line under the tree area and blot. Brush a little into the tree area.
7 While the paint is slightly tacky, use your fingers to drop water onto the surface and then blot gently.

8 Brush in additional alcohol inks as desired to add depth and texture.

9 Rub a bit of Red Pepper re-inker into the corners and sides of the piece.

wabi-sabi wisdom

Alcohol ink leaves a strong color. If you decide to paint over an area where you have used alcohol ink, use a dark color if you want to obscure the ink. If you paint over an unwanted area of alcohol ink in a light color, the ink will still show through. This can produce interesting effects, however, so don’t be afraid to try it. (See “Ghost River” in Wabi Sabi Art Workshop, on page 23, for an example of this.)
NIGHT AND THE MOON!
MY NEIGHBOR PLAYING ON HIS FLUTE—
OUT OF TUNE!

KOJO

GALLERY: Outside the Village – Acrylic and re-inker on wood panel
Dripping a vivid green, alcohol ink creates a believable hillside in this piece.
Companion to Chapter 3: Discovering Molding Paste

Adding molding paste to your painting-knife work makes it even more fun. This process may remind you of frosting a cake. You can use the molding paste to create stiff peaks or deep scores in your piece. This paste dries to a matte surface. It takes longer to dry than regular acrylic gel medium, but it’s well worth the wait.

This project was inspired in part by the work of the 19th century French painter Édouard Manet. He and his contemporaries were influenced by the work of Japanese print-makers. Manet also used the wet-on-wet painting technique that we are using in our painting-knife work.

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**Manet in Japan** — Acrylic paint and molding paste on wood panel

*~Kyoshi Takahama*
1. Mix Buff acrylic paint with light molding paste. Apply onto a smooth gessoed surface with a painting knife. Mix pastel yellow unevenly into this layer.

2. Use the painting knife to put black paint mixed with molding paste on the top of the panel.

3. With your painting knife, drag red-orange paint mixed with the molding paste along the center to the right corner.

4. Add Ultramarine Blue to the area in the center, scraping some of the blue away.

5. With the painting knife, layer Buff and gray paints and spread the resulting color on the bottom part of the panel. Scrape some away.

6. Add a squarish shape of gray paint over the light area.
7 Add in some red-orange and gold paints on the edge of the panel where the light and dark sections meet.

8 Add pastel yellow over parts of the previous layer. Add more molding paste as needed.

9 Scrape some of the pastel yellow into the red-orange and the gold.

10 Incise in various areas with the tip of the painting knife.
I simplified the composition in this piece from that of the photo that inspired it. I wanted the rich texture and density of the paint and molding paste to remain the focus of the piece.
Companion to Chapter 3: Self-Leveling Medium

As we did with the re-inkers, in this project we’ll use self-leveling medium in a way it wasn’t designed to be used. This rich, sticky medium is wonderful for its intended purpose, which is to allow the application of thick paint in an even manner without brushstrokes. We’re going to use this product to un-level our support; to make a thick uneven design right on the gessoed surface. This design will be an integral element of the finished piece.

Sea Grass – Self-leveling medium, acrylic and re-inker on wood panel

AN OLD SILENT POND ...
A FROG JUMPS INTO THE POND,
SPLASH! SILENCE AGAIN.

-BASHO
1. On a smooth pre-treated surface pour self-leveling medium in a random pattern and let dry overnight.

2. Squeeze Bottle Green alcohol ink across the board about half the way down.

3. Brush Pesto re-inker glaze across the board under the green area. The paint will highlight the textured areas left by the self-leveling medium.

4. Add a layer of Tobacco re-inker glaze over the pesto area at the bottom of the piece and blot a little.
5. Apply Watermelon re-inker glaze above the green area and blot.

6. Brush Buff acrylic paint over the Watermelon area and blot.

7. Apply a bit of Caramel re-inker glaze into the top part of the piece to soften it and give it an aged look.

8. Incise vertical varied lines into the lower part of the painting to suggest grass.
GALLERY: Resting on the Road – Self-leveling medium, acrylic and re-inker glaze on wood panel

The texture of the self-leveling medium suggests a rocky, mountainous area.
Companion to Chapter 7: Using Oil Pastels with Wax

Encaustic medium loves anything oily. Oil pastels glide smoothly over your piece to create line, shape or text. Oil pastel marks can be left as they are after you add them or they can be smudged using your fingers or a soft brush. If you choose, you can gently fuse in the oil pastel. In the following project we’re going to use a squiggle of black oil pastel for a lively focal point. We’ll color in a red pastel area for an accent. Let loose and enjoy letting your piece dance with these vital pastel flourishes!

Creative Dance – Encaustic, paper and oil pastel on wood panel
1. Paint and fuse three layers of encaustic medium onto a wood panel. Paint and fuse two layers of white encaustic paint. When the paint layer has cooled, brush green-gold encaustic paint brush around half of a tuna can on the right side center of the piece. Fuse gently.

2. When the white layer has cooled, draw a loose looping design on the wax with a black oil pastel crayon.

3. Gently smudge the pastel design in random areas with your fingertips.

4. Tear off a piece of Mexican Amate Bark marble paper and loosen the threads. Collage it below the black design.

5. Color a small oblong shape under the bark paper with a light red oil pastel crayon.

wabi-sabi wisdom
You can now darken the black pastel line if desired, extending a bit of the line into the bark paper area.

If desired, carefully fuse the pastel line with a light heat gun application or a low-torch flame.
I used a turquoise oil pastel to color on the design in the right center and then fused the area. This pastel addition provides the interest and focus for the piece.

NO SKY,
NO EARTH—BUT STILL
SNOWFLAKES FALL.

-HASHIN
I created this companion piece to Color Riot in a similar way. The abstract building is created from vintage book pages. I rubbed burnt sienna oil paint into the bottom area over a layer of tissue and other papers. The red chimney-like area on the top left of the building is a small piece of fabric.
Wabi Sabi Hand-Embellished Papers

You’ll be amazed how easy it is to create gorgeous papers that exemplify the wabi-sabi style. I use my paper cut or torn up for collage, for book covers and for backgrounds. You can cover boxes with your papers and use them in your encaustic pieces.

I sometimes find that commercial collage paper, while gorgeous, is too heavy for a particular project. My method of embellishing papers makes them pliable enough to use as wrapping paper and sturdy enough to bend around a book for a custom cover. The addition of glaze medium makes delicate mulberry paper stronger so you don’t need to worry much about the paper tearing. As always, I encourage you to experiment with various tools and techniques. It’s all good!

WHAT YOU’LL NEED for this chapter

- medium weight mulberry or similar paper
- acrylic glaze medium
- acrylic gel medium
- acrylic paints
- re-inkers
- rubber stamps and ink pads
- chlorine bleach
- water
- faux finish comb
Chapter 8:
Fun with Re-Inkers, Rubber Stamps and Bleach

We’ll use gorgeous re-inker glazes, rubber stamps of text and household bleach in this project to create a paper with the look of an old secret text or treasure map.
1. Cover a sheet of Thai mulberry or a similar paper with buff acrylic paint mixed with acrylic glaze medium. The glaze medium will help the paper absorb the paint and will make the paper more flexible. Then use a rubber stamp of text and a dark brown stamp pad to cover the paper with writing.

2. Paint a layer of Caramel re-inker glaze over parts of the paper. Follow the same steps with Lettuce re-inker glaze and then Rust re-inker glaze.

3. Use a different rubber stamp of text and a black stamp pad to add writing in various areas.

4. Mix some liquid bleach with a little water. Sponge and spatter the bleach over various areas, especially any area that you want to lighten. When the bleach has dried you’ll see that the color has disappeared in these areas, though most or all of the stamped text will still be visible.

5. Drip, brush or otherwise apply any or all of the re-inker glazes as desired.

wabi-sabi wisdom

You can get great effects by dropping alcohol inks on your papers after you have applied re-inkers and/or paint layers mixed with glaze medium. You can dip your rubber stamp in the bleach and water mixture and stamp down a negative image or text. You can spray water and/or alcohol on your papers as a final touch.
Chapter 8: Faux Finish Combing and More

Combing paint and re-inker glazes on paper is much more fun than combing your hair. You can make long sweeps, staggered marks, cross hatches, or whatever else you discover. Adding gold transfer effects lifts this paper far above the ordinary.

**Gold Flecked Combed Paper** – Acrylic paint, re-inker, gold transfer foil, gel medium and glaze medium on mulberry paper
Layer a sheet of mulberry paper with glaze medium. Paint a layer of sienna paint on the paper, dragging a faux finish comb through part of the paint.

Repeat this step with a rich green re-inker and glaze.

When the layers have dried, put a layer of buff acrylic paint on the comb and drag the comb over random areas.

When the buff layer is dry, coat the paper with gel medium. Let the medium dry until the surface of the paper is tacky to the touch. Rub on gold transfer leaf randomly on the paper. Be sure to get some leaf in the combed areas for extra texture.

wabi-sabi wisdom

Even if you aren’t thrilled with some of the papers you embellish, keep them around anyway. You’ll find that when you tear or cut them into strips or pieces they will look great!
I used some found shiny paper for this book cover. The combing effects showed up beautifully on this paper and the paper should be easy to clean if I spill coffee on it!
After I made a combed background with acrylic paint I collaged off-white tissue paper on top of the mulberry paper. I did this in various areas, using gel medium.
Visual art was Serena’s first love as a child. She moved on to acting in local plays and later became a licensed professional counselor. Serena rediscovered her desire to make art following her first trip to Italy. She taught herself to paint and create mixed-media work in midlife, proving it’s never too late to create!

Serena holds creativity and art workshops, and groups and individual art coaching at her studio and at national art retreats. She exhibits and sells her work through galleries and shops, as well as online. Serena has published *A Joyful Frenzy*, a book of her artwork with text on the stories and processes behind the work. Serena’s magazine articles have appeared in issues of *Cloth Paper Scissors* magazine and *Studios* magazines and in *Cloth Paper Scissors* e-Books.

Serena’s great joy is to provide an atmosphere in which you can discover or rekindle your own creative abilities. She lives in Portland, Oregon with her partner and near her children and grandchild. She loves hanging out with family and friends, and is an avid reader.