

COLD WAX AND OIL PAINTING SUGGESTIONS FOR ALTERNATIVE MATERIALS

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Cold Wax Medium Recipes

Jerry McLaughlin & Rebecca Crowell's Basic Cold Wax Medium with Damar Crystals & OMS

One part filtered beeswax

Two parts clean damar crystals (not Damar Varnish)

1 to 16 parts or more odorless mineral spirits (OMS), depending on the thickness desired

Melt the beeswax and damar in a non-reactive container. Once melted, remove wax from the heat. Add the OMS and stir. Stir occasionally until the mixture cools. Keep a piece of paper or towel over the container while it cools to prevent dust and insects from entering. Store the cooled medium in a covered container. If you feel your medium needs to be thinned, you can add additional OMS and wait several days for it to incorporate.

Jeanne Morrison's Cold Wax Medium with Natural Citrus Solvent

One part filtered beeswax in chunks, pastilles, or prill / pellet

2 to 5 parts pure d-limonene natural citrus solvent, depending on the thickness you want.

This medium can be made with or without heating and can be thinned later by adding additional d-limonene. To make it without heating, combine the wax and solvent in a nonreactive container with a tightly sealing lid. Invert gently every few days. The wax should dissolve in 2-5 days.

To make this wax using heat, combine beeswax and solvent in a nonreactive container. Heat gently. Once melted, remove the mixture from the heat. Store in a covered container.

Henning Holm Nielsen's Solvent-Free Medium

Two parts filtered beeswax

Three parts bleached, refined linseed oil

In a non-reactive container heat the wax and linseed oil until the wax melts. Allow the mixture to cool. Store it in a covered container.

This cold wax can be tinted with oil paints or dry pigments. Nielson thins it with Liquin or linseed oil and adds a few drops of a siccativ to help speed drying. For thicker layers or more texture, he adds marble dust or sawdust, both of which accelerate drying.

NOTES

To check the temperature of the beeswax as it melts I recommend using a thermometer. I use a candy thermometer which I can clip onto whatever container I am using. Beeswax has a melting point of approximately 145° F and will begin to scorch if it goes above 170° F. Do not leave it unattended.

Linseed oil is used to extend the drying time of oil paint. Safflower, sunflower, or walnut oil can be used as an alternative to linseed oil. Walnut is the most used alternative.

Liquin is an oil painting medium used to accelerate the drying time of oil paint. Winsor & Newton produces it.

It is best to make homemade cold wax in a well-ventilated area. The summer is an ideal time to plug in an induction hot plate outside and make your wax medium.

Wear personal protective gear when making cold wax medium.

I go to a gently used store such as Savers for pots and pans and other tools that I can dedicate for making cold wax only.

Preparing Watercolor Paper as a Substrate

While oiled paper and primed wood are the most common choices for painting on with cold wax and oil, when primed a good quality paper, like watercolor paper, can be an alternative substrate. The goal when prepping the paper is to create a barrier between the paper and paint. Without careful prep the solvents in the oil can cause the paper to deteriorate and the paint can crack. Watercolor paper is heavy weight and less absorbent than other papers (for instance copy / computer and drawing paper) so it does not buckle or warp when wet.

TOOLS

Watercolor paper to prime as a painting surface.

Flat surface, such as, a wood panel, plexiglass, thick cardboard for mounting the watercolor paper.

Masking tape

Acrylic gesso

Brushes or sponges (smooth or textured) to apply the gesso

Acrylic paint to tint the gesso (optional)

Oil primer (optional)

Utility Knife (optional)

1. Secure your sheet of paper to your flat surface with masking tape around the edges.
2. Apply a coat of acrylic gesso to the paper. For a smooth or textured surface, use different brushes or sponges to apply the gesso.
3. After the first coat has dried completely apply a second coat and let it dry completely.
4. You can add a base color to the paper by tinting it with a thin coat of acrylic paint. For example, you might want to add a thin layer of burnt umber or sky blue to a paper that you will use to paint a landscape.
5. For an even less porous surface, a final option would be to add a third layer of oil painting primer over the dried acrylic gesso.

NOTES

Remember the rule – you can paint over acrylic with oil but cannot paint over oil with acrylic.

You can leave the paper mounted on the flat surface as you paint with oil and cold wax. Alternately, you could mount the prepared paper to a wood panel box and then paint on it. If the panel is smaller than the paper you can trim the paper with a utility knife so it will be flush with the wood edge of the panel.

SOURCES

The recipes were excerpted from the book Cold Wax Medium: Techniques, Concepts & Conversations by Rebecca Crowell & Jerry McLaughlin. Also available on the Pistrucchia (Bottega) Artworks site and Henning Holm Nielsen's on Pinterest. Here are links to refer to for more info:

- Henning Holm Nielsen on Pinterest @henningholm
- Jeanne Morrison & Robert Massey <https://pistrucchiartworks.wordpress.com/2013/08/19/oil-paint-medium-recipe-cold-wax-paste/>
- Jerry McLaughlin <https://www.jerrymclaughlinart.com/>
- Rebecca Crowell <https://www.rebeccacrowell.com/>