Acrylic Layers Workshop

Quick Reference Guide:

Art Media Layers

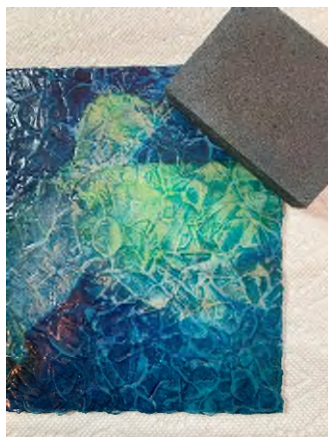# Art Media Layers Quick Reference Guide

Art Media Layers Overview

With the Acrylic Layers technique, the Art Media Layers are where you really develop your intended ideas! We all paint in layers already so what is the difference with this technique? You don't do ALL of your painting (or drawing, collaging, etc.) all at once. The point of this technique is to physically separate visual layers to create a unique viewing experience.

Applying any media on the dried acrylic gel is VERY DIFFERENT from working directly on paper, canvas, or panel! The dried gel is very slick and is not a uniform flat surface, so it takes some getting used to. Beware frustration trying to get the SAME effects you normally achieve and enjoy the discoveries of how you adapt your style to this technique!

Key points to remember when applying media to the gel layer:

1. You can add "tooth" to the gel layer through scumbling a thin layer of paint over an area prior to painting more specific details or using CLEAR Gesso to provide a tooth for dry media to adhere to.
2. Use opaque pigment to COVER and hide layers beneath, use transparent (or thinned opaque) pigments to TONE an area or the entire piece.
3. Paint / Draw / Do only one or two "things" per media layer, introduce a "pause" and "hit SAVE" in your normal painting / drawing / making approach, leaving your "next" for another layer!
4. Media Layers include the ADDITION of media as well as the SUBTRACTION of media using sanding blocks or rubbing alcohol to remove media just applied and reveal the layers beneath. (NOTE: It is TOO LATE to remove media if you have already added a new Gel Layer!!!)
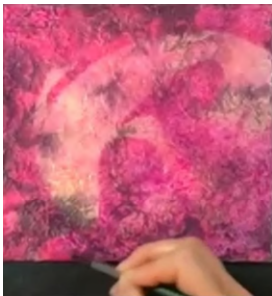

Sanding

Rubbing Alcohol

Art Media Layers Quick Reference Guide

This workshop introduces six Media Layer options which are summarized below

- Paint
- Paint Unifying Layer – Peaks Only
- Paint Unifying Layer - Peaks & Valleys
- Collage
- Draw – Dry Media
- Embedded Objects

You can refer to these to get you started or to inspire your own personal and exciting Media Layer ideas since these are just a start!

Paint
- Can be challenging at first to paint on the slick gel surface; "scumbling" a light layer of "dry brush" paint (not watery or won't stick!) to create "tooth" for more refined painting to stick to is helpful
- Limit how much painting you do on each layer, in the examples at left, painting the negative shapes or background on one layer and leaving the details of the subject for later layers...
- Remember to think through what you want to still be visible from earlier layers; is it just a hint from the underpainting or are there whole areas you want to leave exposed?
- Remember your choice of pigment makes a difference in either covering or toning an area. The top example shows a transparent pigment being used to define the Koi shape while leaving the variety of earlier layers visible. The bottom example shows an opaque pigment being used to cover majority of underpainting in the negative space around the deer.

Paint - Unifying Layer – Peaks Only
- Unifying layers are used to add unity to a piece of disparate parts
- Creating a "veil" by painting only the gel texture peaks with an opaque pigment highlights the texture, unifies the area while still allowing what is underneath in earlier layers to show through the unpainted valleys.
- Useful as a unifying "veil" to soften an area while allowing earlier layers to "sparkle" through

Paint - Unifying Layer – Peaks & Valleys
- Complete coverage (peaks & valleys) of an area or entire piece
- Use opaque for veiling
  - Dry brush scumbling for overall "veiling
  - Thicker for total coverage of earlier layers
  - Subtract with sanding or alcohol to allow earlier layers to sparkle through.
- Use transparent pigment for toning – See example on left
  - Dry brush scumbling for overall "veiling
  - Apply thinner paint to allow earlier layers to show through
- Remember you can "subtract" to reclaim visibility of layers below or create texture by removing only paint on the peaks before you apply the next Gel Layer.

Collage
- You can use collage beyond solely the underpainting layer!
- You can cover an area where you want to hide earlier layers with paper collaged to the gel layer.
- You can add bits of texture and interest collaging pieces onto an existing gel layer.
- Simply glue the collage material to the gel surface using your gel.
- You can embellish the collage media layer with other techniques e.g., paint, dry media, whatever you are inspired to incorporate.
- The collaged material will "float" between layers of gel.
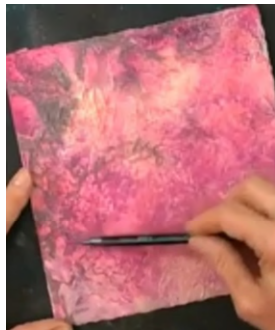
Draw – Dry Media

- Since the clear Gel Layer you are now working on is slippery, you can use CLEAR GESSO to create a clear "tooth" layer first before using dry media on the Gel Layer.
- Dry Media options include:
  - Graphite – see top left example
  - Ink/Pens – see bottom left example
  - Charcoal
  - Chalk Pastel
  - Colored Pencil (soluble and non-soluble)
  - Loose pigment powder
  - Others that adhere / can be "encapsulated" in the next gel layer!
- NOTE: Applying gel on top of dry media may "pick up and spread" the dry media so apply the next Gel Layer GENTLY and carefully if you want to avoid dragging or smears. You may want to experiment and "pick up and spread" dry media on purpose as it can bear interesting results.

Embedded Objects

- Embedding is similar to collage but is differentiated by the encapsulating of actual objects in a Gel Layer.
- If done in later Gel Layers, the object will appear to be floating suspended over the surface.
- Useful for accents and another visual interest mechanism supporting the intent of your piece.

What Else Can You Think Of?

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