

I am often asked how to clean or care for encaustic paintings. Encaustic paintings are extremely durable, as wax has natural adhesive and preservative qualities and is water resistant. The damar resin in the encaustic formula cures and hardens the wax and over time it becomes less and less vulnerable to damage. That said, it can still be scratched, so care should be taken when unpacking and hanging your new piece.

When shipping or transporting an encaustic painting in hot or cold weather it's really important to cover the entire face of the painting with wax paper, then smooth cardboard. Wait for the painting to acclimate to room temperature before removing the wax paper wrapping. When in hot weather the wax paper may stick to the painting – this is normal and why we use wax paper to protect - this is harmless as long as it is removed at room temperature.

You may need to “buff” your piece if it seems dull or hazed over. Temperature changes during shipping may cause the piece to dull somewhat, but the piece can always be brought back to a high glass-like shine. Newer pieces that have had less time to cure will need buffing more often. Always use a lint free cotton cloth and never buff hard enough to warm the surface. As the piece ages and cures it will require less buffing to keep the shine.

When properly fused an encaustic surface is safe and stable in a temperature range from about 40-120°F. Wax is more vulnerable in cold temperatures as it can become brittle. If you were to drop the painting in cold temperatures it will likely shatter. Very hot days can soften the wax somewhat, but will cause no lasting damage. At temperatures above 120°F encaustic may begin to shift. As with any art piece, do not hang your painting in direct sunlight. Encaustic should feel cool to the touch, If you are questioning the placement of the piece gently feel the surface, if it feels warm, it should be moved. And never put encaustic under glass, this can create heat between the glass and encaustic surface.

Fun fact: The Fayum mummy portraits, are over 2000 years old and are still intact, look it up – encaustic is an interesting and unique medium and it's worth knowing a little about the history of it.