

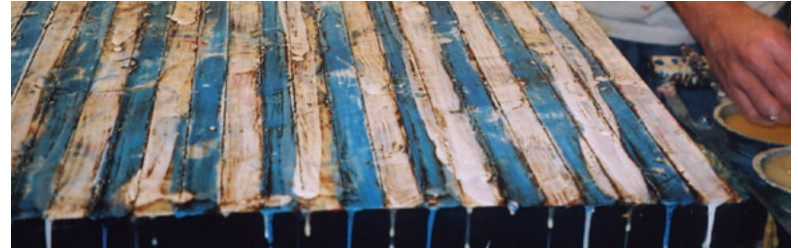
# Creating a New Language with Paint and Wax

Artist Brad Ellis pushes the limits of encaustic painting using

Ampersand Hardbord™



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For the last several years, I've been exploring the concept of creating a new language in paint and wax by experimenting with different graphic marks and imagery that are visually compelling in an abstract way. The medium of encaustic lends itself to this kind of work because I can dig and scratch into the wax to make interesting marks and textures. I can also combine the wax with collage and paint to

a stretched canvas. I also like the durability, craftsmanship and the 2" cradle frame around the back of the Hardbord. This deep cradle allows the paintings to be hung without any additional framing.

My process for *Currents No. 28* included many rounds of alternating layers of paint and collage until the picture had matured into a finished work of art. I began with a coating of black oil paint that covered the entire surface of the Hardbord and the sides of the deep cradle. Then, I hand selected pages, covered with text, from some old books and collaged them onto the black underpainting. Each page was glued down with the seams overlapping so that stripes formed where the pages intersected. After the board was completely covered with paper, I applied extremely thin washes of acrylics in yellow and brown to "age" the appearance of the paper. After the paper dried, I painted calligraphic marks with acrylics over the entire surface allowing the text from the pages to show through.

freeform abstract scratching pattern. This made the surface look rugged and aged. When I finished digging into the surface with the tools, I fused the wax with the heat gun to seal in the scratches. To age the surface more, I rubbed sepia colored oil paint, thinned with linseed oil, into the scratches and over the painting, until the entire surface was brown. With paper towels and solvent, I then carefully rubbed off the oil paint, leaving it thicker in some areas and thinner in others. This allowed the text, calligraphic marks and wax paint to show through. I let the painting "set" for a few days before buffing it out with a soft cotton cloth.



Brad Ellis is represented in Austin, Chicago and in Dallas, which is where he currently lives. For more information on the artist, visit [bradellisart.com](http://bradellisart.com)

create dramatically aged surfaces. This latest series of language paintings is called *Currents*, of which *Currents No. 28* (shown far right) is one. These pictures capture the feeling of a split-second in time before our thoughts are either written or spoken.

*Currents No. 28* is executed using encaustic, oil, acrylic and collage on a product produced by Ampersand Art Supply, called Hardbord™. I used a 2" deep cradle for this painting. Hardbord is an unprimed, pressed wood panel. It stays extremely flat and will not warp under the heavy medium of encaustic. One of the main reasons I like this product so much is that it allows me to carve and dig into the wax-based encaustic paint without it chipping or cracking off of the surface the way it would on a more malleable product such as

This next step is very important. I applied a coating of encaustic wax medium over the entire surface to seal it completely and then fused the wax by evenly melting it onto the surface with a heat gun. Where the stripes were created earlier by the overlapping paper, I began to define them more by building up thin transparent blue layers of hot wax that I applied with a natural bristle brush.

I use R & F encaustics that are placed into tins on a hot plate that I keep next to the painting while I am working. I always mix my colors ahead of time in the tins so that I have a set palette to use. I wanted the blue stripes to be raised above the adjacent flat paper stripes to give this painting interesting surface dimension. I applied five or six more coats to the stripes until I was satisfied with their thickness.

Next, I used an etching tool and a metal compass to scratch deep into the wax using a



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