

Tip #9

Texturing Your Painting Surface

There are times when you're just hungry for richness and texture, a dimensional effect that pure watercolor, acrylic or oil don't traditionally offer—at least not with straight painting techniques. Not collage or assemblage, though that can work too—I'm talking about texturing your surface before painting on it.

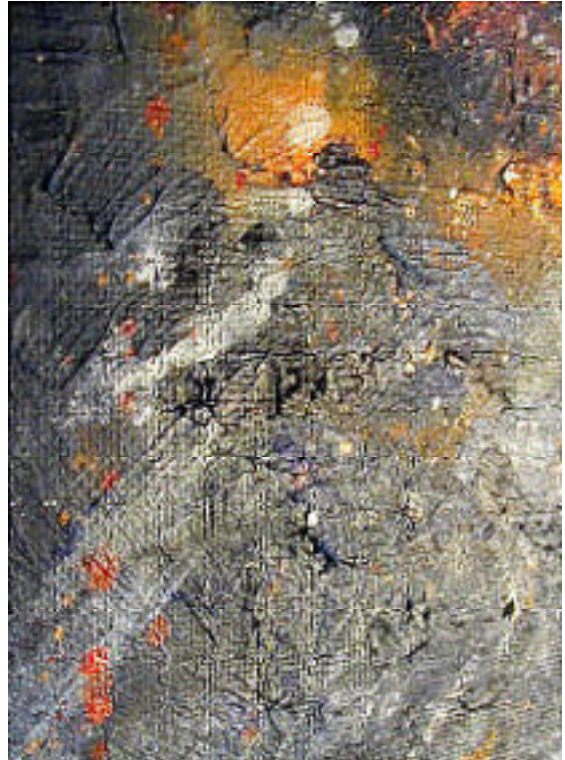
Most companies that make acrylic paints also offer gesso or modeling paste. Some have additives with a variety of special textures, from light to heavy, ready to be painted onto your paper or canvas. Look for gel mediums, pumice gel, modeling paste, or molding paste.

Paint them on with a stiff brush, trowel them on with a palette knife or other tool, then do whatever you can think of to create the texture you want—pat with your fingers, use that palette knife some more, smush with the side of your hand, draw into the surface with the end of a brush, even embed string, thread, tiny glass beads, sand, sawdust—whatever!

Allow to dry thoroughly (may take overnight!) and then paint over this newly interesting surface with opaque or transparent applications of watercolor, acrylic, or oil.

Art 9-1, Texture Ground

Here, I used modeling paste and gesso to underpaint the billowing smoke and flame in a dramatic painting—this detail shows the effects of pushing the paste with my fingers before it dried.



Art 9-2, Cairntbeam

I've always been fascinated by archaeology and the marks left behind by ancient peoples. My heritage is Celtic, and the eternal spiral form appears over and over in many Celtic lands—you may have seen the spiral-carved stones at Newgrange, in Ireland. Many underground burial sites display these deeply textured surfaces, where they lay hidden and unseen for hundreds of years. I wanted to suggest the huge boulders that make up these sites, and the markings on them, so I drew out the shapes on my canvas and troweled on the modeling paste. While it was wet, I drew back into it to make spirals and fissures where the rocks would be, then allowed it to dry. Finally I splashed on thin washes of rich acrylic color and the shadow of the people who have discovered this amazing sight.

