

## Distressed Cold Wax Drawing

Brush-on wax and reduction drawing techniques a create “grungy” look and feel

For decades, ceramicists have used wax emulsion as a glaze resist for detailed, crisp lines. It’s untinted, liquid, and very safe to use with a brush straight from the bottle — no heat required. Used on the bottom of a clay pot, the wax keeps glazes from accidentally adhering to the kiln shelf. Once the wax is heated in the kiln, it burns safely away at a low temperature.

Now there’s another application for liquid wax in the artroom — a reduction technique that involves etching or scratching an image into the wax, filling it with acrylic, then selectively removing color and wax by wiping and further etching.

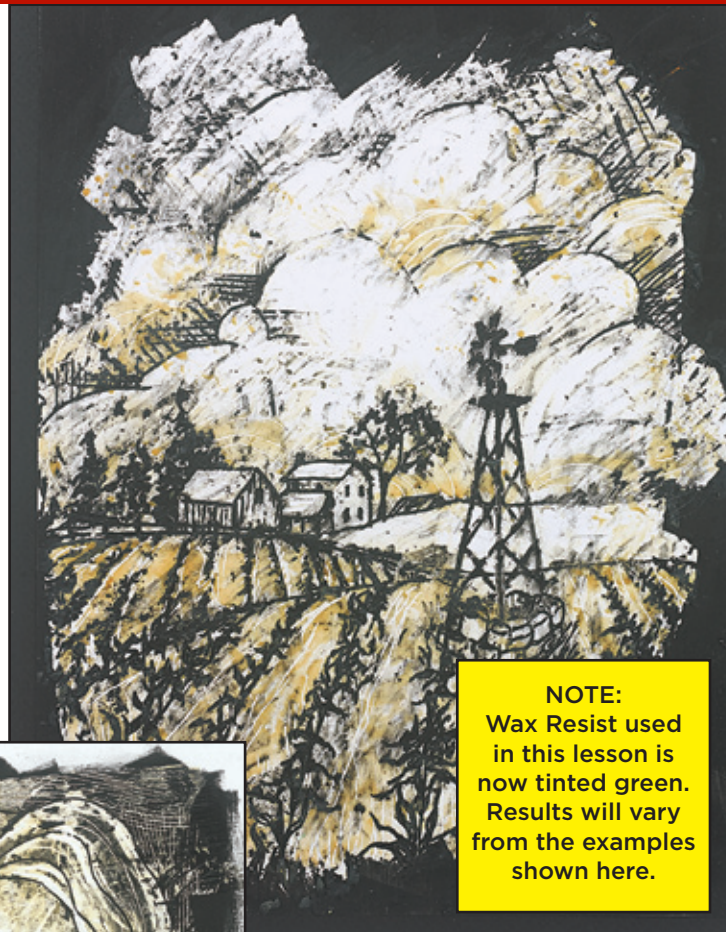
When used as an art term, “reduction” means a process in which color or media is removed to reveal negative space. For example, a charcoal reduction drawing is made by covering the paper with solid black, then lifting it away in places. The black remains as shadows and the removed areas become highlights.

In this process, the remaining wax on the page will create mid-range values of gray and green that will deepen slightly as the wax ages. The image looks like a distressed print. Very unusual!

**GRADES 5-12** Note: Instructions and materials are based upon a class size of 24 students. Adjust as needed.

### Process

1. Brush one coat of wax resist over the surface of the paper, keeping it away from the edges. For interesting borders, keep the brushstrokes defined. Allow the wax to dry for approximately 30 minutes until it’s uniform in color.
2. Using a variety of tools, create an etched image with lines incised into the wax layer. Use enough pressure that the tool reaches the paper. Keep in mind that the etched lines will hold color and be dark. Collect small wax pieces that are removed in a bowl or on a foam plate.
3. Using a flat or foam brush, cover the entire surface with black or dark brown acrylic color. Paint to the edges of the



**NOTE:**  
Wax Resist used  
in this lesson is  
now tinted green.  
Results will vary  
from the examples  
shown here.



### Materials

Amaco<sup>®</sup> Wax Resist, 16 oz jar (32936-0006); share one across class

Strathmore<sup>®</sup> 300 Series Student Watercolor Paper, class pack of 24 sheets, 9" x 12", cold press 140 lb (10085-1023); need one sheet per student

Blickrylic<sup>®</sup> Student Acrylics, quart Mars Black (00711-2047) or Burnt Umber (00711-8057); share across class

Foam Brush, 1" (05114-1001); need one per student

Boxwood 6" Clay Tool Set, 10-piece double-ended set (30304-1069); share three across class

### Optional Materials

Roylco<sup>®</sup> Paint Scrapers, set of 4 (04986-1004)

Blick<sup>®</sup> Economy Canvas Panel Classroom Packs, 9" x 12" package of 24 (07015-1023)

Dorland's Wax Medium, 4 oz (00428-1004)



**Step 1:** Brush a coat of wax resist onto the paper and allow it to dry.



**Step 2:** Etch lines into the surface of the wax using a variety of tools.



**Step 3:** Cover the entire surface with acrylic and allow it to dry, then wipe it away with a paper towel.

### Process, continued

paper and allow to dry just until it reaches a matte surface.

4. Crumple a paper towel and scrub it over the paint, lifting it away from the wax surface. The paint will remain in the etched lines and on the paper, but will not adhere to the wax.

Suggestions:

- It's better to work on small sections of the drawing at a time to keep the piece evenly covered with paint.
- Leave some of the paint sitting on the wax to create "chunky" textures and gray shades.

5. Use tools to scrape away more wax. Gentle pressure will scrape away small amounts of wax, creating lighter shades of gray, and heavy pressure will remove wax and reveal the white of the paper beneath.

NOTE: Be cautious not to scrape away too much wax. If too much paint is scraped away, it can be repainted; however, if too much wax is scraped away, it cannot be reapplied. Dry wax will resist wet wax.

6. As wax is scraped away, it creates residual pieces that cling to tables, floors, and clothing. Be diligent about picking them up and putting them in a bowl or on a foam plate. Clean tools often by wiping them with a paper towel.
7. The finished drawing should be protected from high temperatures. Expect the color of the wax to deepen slightly over time.

### Options

- The surface will remain soft but not tacky unless it is heated. To protect it from dirt and damage, brush on a coat of Dorland's Wax Medium as a final varnish.
- Paper will tend to buckle and warp. To avoid this, use a canvas panel instead.

### National Standards for Visual Arts Education

**Content Standard #1** — Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes.

**5-8** Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques, and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas.

**9-12** Students apply media, techniques, and processes with sufficient skill, confidence, and sensitivity that their intentions are carried out in their artworks.



**Step 4:** Use tools to scratch away more wax to reveal the white paper beneath as highlights.

