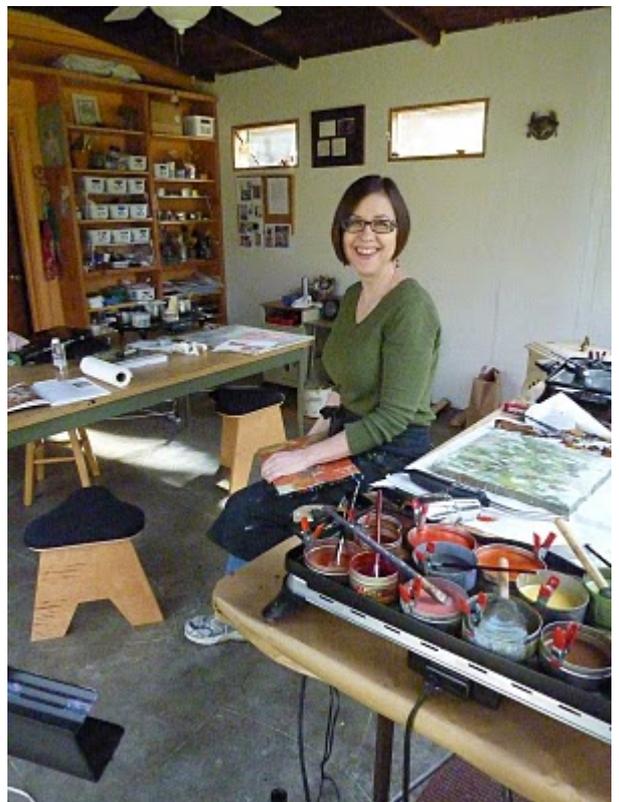


Shapiro Uses Beeswax to Create Green Art

Have you heard of [encaustic painting](#)? Me neither, until today when I had the opportunity to meet encaustic artist, [Rebecca Shapiro](#), at her studio in Portland, OR. Unlike entering the studio of an artist who works with oil paints, the studio of an artist who works with beeswax smells refreshing and delightful. The melted wax is a form of artistic aromatherapy.

Here's what Rebecca has to say about her art:



Influenced by a childhood in the Pacific Northwest, I strive for sustainable practices in my studio and earth friendly materials in my mediums. I have always embraced a green heart and am currently exploring what it means to be a sustainable artist seeking kinship between art, nature and the human experience. I hope my art will help us all remember the interconnectedness of life.

A few years ago, I switched to encaustic because it is a more earth friendly choice for me. There is very little waste and I

don't have to wash anything down the sink when I rinse my brushes. There is also a satisfying unity between the plants that inspire me, the bees that pollinate them and the beeswax. Each layer of wax allows me to be innovative, building my subject with glorious textures and ethereal depth. Sometimes, forty to fifty layers of wax are fused in a piece to abstract the essence of a plant. This sensuous medium gives me the freedom to express my love for the wild braid of colors, lines and forms in plants.



As being green and sustainable practices are being implemented in business, I would like to see businesses take their commitment a step further by purchasing/leasing art from artists who share the similar philosophies about being green. I would like to see a new

breed of art patron emerge, that of the eco-art collector. These are people and organizations who use their dollars and support artists and their art who are considering their materials, studio practices and personal philosophy and in some cases, even their subject matter.

So, just what is sustainable fine art? In a nutshell, sustainable means to be made from renewable resources without depleting future resources, something that can continue indefinitely. If you look back through time, art certainly does that. Look at the paintings of Lascaux, DaVinci or Picasso. These works can be defined as sustainable because so far, they have continued indefinitely and we want to do everything to conserve them.



But now, things have changed. Sustainable fine art can't just mean that you've created an image worthy of preservation. Sustainable fine art means that you, as an artist, must consider your materials, your studio practices and your personal philosophy. It means that you, as an art collector, use your dollars to support sustainable art and create a new breed known as the eco-art collector.

No, what I'm talking about is digging deeper into what sustainability means and apply art to the cradle to cradle concept. Cradle to cradle asks us to transform the way we make things – the way we make art. When a product returns to its industry at the end of a useful life and its materials are used to make valuable new products that do not return to the landfill, this is sustainable.



Why not design products so safe they don't need regulation? Imagine a relationship between artist and eco-art collector where the artwork is returned, reworked and reinvented at the end of its life. Imagine a painting that has served its purpose, tossed on your garden for composting which feeds plants that are used to create pigments for future use.

There is amazing fine art out there made from recycled and reclaimed materials. But what about the fine artist like me that uses paints, pencils, inks, charcoals, pastels, paper, adhesives, varnishes, photography, etc? I might be green in my beliefs, studio practices and imagery but what if my medium isn't sustainable? How can I create art but make choices that leave little or no impact? I don't have all the answers but it's worth having a conversation and exploring.

If you're looking for beautiful botanical art, check out Shapiro's work. Her pieces are ideal conversation-starters in locations such as:

- flower shops
- natural food stores
- aromatherapy shops
- green spas
- anyplace that sells honey or bee products
- green art galleries
- businesses located near bee farms
- organic or healthful restaurants

- botanical garden shops
- natural museum stores

If you have more ideas about where encaustic art might be featured, or you have something else you'd like to say, please leave a comment and add to the buzz about encaustic art! It's safe art without the sting of toxins.