

IMPRINTS

In both transparent and opaque painting, exciting results can be achieved by pressing real objects onto the wet picture surface so that they leave an imprint of their shape or texture.

In oil and acrylic painting, the technique involves simply pressing the object firmly into a layer of thick, fairly tacky paint, then removing it quickly. Objects with a raised or openweave surface texture work best — try using the side of an old kitchen colander or a potato masher, a fork, a piece of bark, or a chunk of an old bicycle tire — the possibilities are endless.

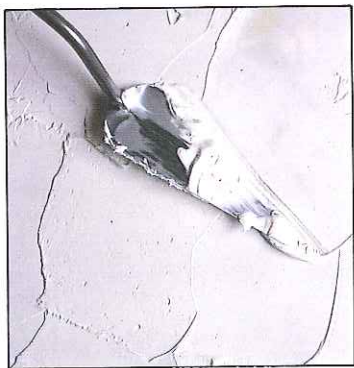
When the paint is dry, the imprinted area can be further enhanced with the addition of GLAZING OR DRYBRUSH, which emphasize the texture of the paint.

An alternative method of impressing is to coat the object itself with paint and press it onto a dry area, or straight onto the canvas or paper. This works particularly well with gouache, ink, and watercolor, because the pattern left behind when the object is removed often has a soft, delicate quality. Natural objects — leaves, feathers, and grasses, for example — work well with this method, as do scraps of openweave fabric and lace.

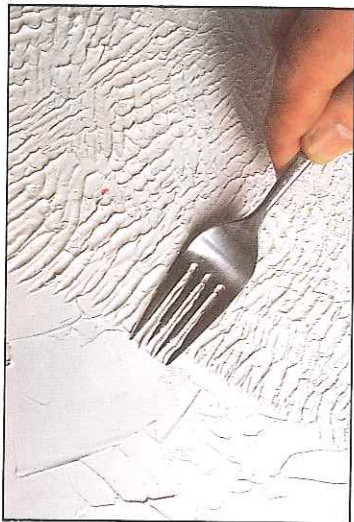
As with COLLAGE, this technique encourages the artist to look for the creative possibilities in ordinary things — things that might normally be taken for granted. However, the artist must rely on discretion and good taste: the technique should always be a means to an end, not merely a clever trick or device.

Acrylics

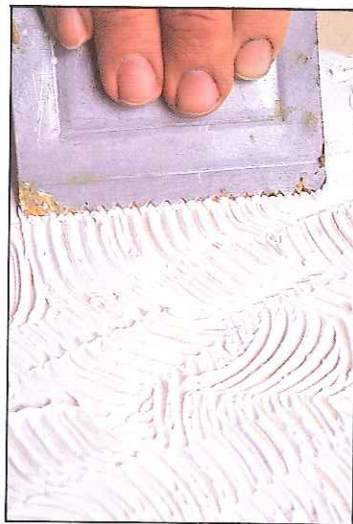
Working in acrylics gives you richer textural possibilities than any other medium. Acrylic paint can be thickened with gel medium and built up in thick layers, without any danger of the paint cracking. Alternatively you can simply apply a thick layer of modeling paste and work into that. While the paint or paste is still wet, patterns and textures can be imprinted using virtually any object with a sharp point or a textured surface.



1 A thick layer of acrylic mixed with modeling paste is applied to the panel with a painting knife and smoothed out.



2 A kitchen fork is pressed into the wet paint, leaving a lively pattern of grooves and ridges.



3 Here an adhesive tool is being used. By twisting and turning the imprinting tool you can create endlessly varied patterns. Once the paint is dry, the raised texture can be enhanced by working over it with glazes, scumbles, or drybrush. For example, you could imprint a pattern into a layer of dark paint and then drybrush over it with a light color: the drybrush will pick up the raised points of the paint, leaving the low points untouched, and the result is a color with an intriguing three-dimensional quality.



Imprints

1 Almost any object, as long as it has one relatively flat side, can be used for the imprinting technique. Here the artist is using a large, soft

brush to coat a leaf with a layer of gouache. The paint should be of a fairly stiff consistency, not too runny.



2 The paint-coated leaf is laid carefully onto the paper and pressed down firmly.

KNIFE PAINTING



3 The leaf is removed, revealing the printed image. A smooth or Hot Pressed paper gives the cleanest print, but a medium-rough paper creates an interesting broken effect because the paint doesn't "take" so evenly.



4 The surfaces of some objects — such as feathers — repel water, making them unsuitable for imprinting. This is easily remedied by massaging liquid soap into the object to remove the surface oil. Rinse and pat dry, then brush on a coat of paint in the usual way. To prevent smudging, lay a piece of tissue over the feather when making the imprint. Experiment with various objects, such as pieces of open-weave cloth. Also try pressing unpainted objects into a damp wash to produce interesting negative patterns.

A knife may be a less sensitive painting tool than a brush, but it is in fact an exciting and versatile way of applying paint, built up in thick *IMPASTOS* to produce expressive textural effects, or applied smoothly for soft, subtle passages.

The Fauve painter Maurice Vlaminck (1876-1958) often used knife strokes in his skies and foregrounds, achieving exquisite color effects by partially mixing the pigments on his palette and applying them with broad, sweeping strokes that contained infinite subtleties of tint.

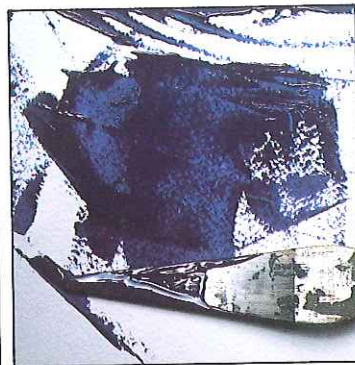
Normally associated with oil and acrylic painting, knives can also be used to create pattern and texture in watercolor, ink, and gouache. Even egg tempera can be applied with a knife, so long as the paint is not too thick, and the knife must not be metal — bone or plastic will do.

Painting knives (not to be confused with palette knives) come in many designs and sizes, but generally they are trowel-shaped, made of pliable steel, and often have a cranked handle which keeps the artist's fingers clear of the painting surface.

Oil • Acrylic • Gouache

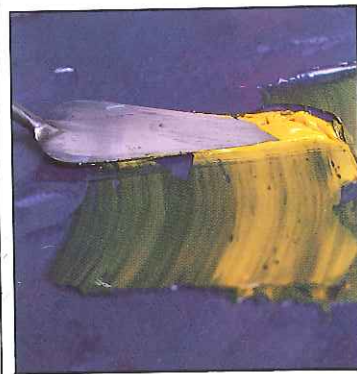
Oil paints and acrylics are perfectly suited to knife painting, because they have a soft, creamy texture and can be handled without trickling or running. This technique works best on stretched canvas, which has a "give" in it that responds well to the springy blade of the knife.

Knife painting demands a bold approach. Set the paint on the surface with a decisive movement, lifting the blade away cleanly at the end of the stroke. Avoid going back over the stroke, because this deadens the color and reduces



Knife painting

1 Apply the paint thickly to the support and spread it with a trowel-shaped painting knife to achieve a variety of interesting textures. One way of moving the paint is to rest the heel of the knife on the support and move it in an arc, spreading the paint with it.



2 Here the artist is partially blending two colors wet-in-wet. Cadmium yellow is first squeezed onto a previously applied layer of ultramarine. Then the knife is used, as if spreading butter, to distribute the paint in different directions. If care is taken not to overblend the colors, attractive subtleties of tint can be achieved.