



More Tips on Using Alternative Painting Supports

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As an artist concerned about the human-made environmental crisis, one huge dilemma I face is what materials and techniques to use that have a lower effect on the health of the planet.

I choose to consume less, and I look for materials in the rejected objects found everywhere:

Rethink, refuse, reduce, reuse, repurpose, repair,...

In the process of looking for alternatives to artmaking, I love to step outside my usual way. This opens new paths and possibilities! Do not be afraid to experiment!

SOME IDEAS FOR MORE SUSTAINABLE PAINTING PRACTICE:

ALTERNATIVE SUPPORTS FOR PAINTINGS:

- corrugated cardboard previously used for packaging
- thick packaging panels, also made of cardboard, frequent in shipments
- discarded vinyl records
- coffee beans bags or other food bags
- the backing of watercolor paper pads, typically consumed by artists, or any other sturdy cardboard
- commercially produced art reproductions found on the curb or in thrift stores
- any surface from a rejected object will do: wood, plastic, etc.

Important tip: To avoid the alternative support, especially cardboards, from warping, you can either prime both sides of the support with acrylic gesso or paint with a thin layer of any color paint on the back once you finish your work. While drying, use heavy weights to keep the surface flat.

APPLYING PAINTING:

In my art practice, I use rags from old clothes, etc. instead of paper towels to clean and use for texture, I reuse single-use plastic cups to hold paint or water, and to also stretch the use of my paints (so I do not have to throw paint down the drain so often) I have several supports on hand in my studio, to paint on in parallel until the paint is all used.

As alternative to brushes for application of paint, I also use:

- Palette knives can be cleaned carefully with an old rag instead of rinsing
- Previously used and clean plastic utensils
- Foam painting brushes (2-4 inches wide) might not need to be rinsed as often as artist brushes
- Old credit cards can be used to spread paint
- Unused and empty droppers from old diagnostic tests are great to add blobs of paint to your work (Make sure they were originally emptied with no liquid or powder since any chemical would alter your painting, etc.)

ALTERNATIVE PAINTS AND DYES:

Since acrylic, which is my painting medium of choice, is basically plastic and thus toxic for the environment, I have also moved to use acrylic paints that use natural pigments. A great brand is "Natural Earth Paints"

(<https://naturalearthpaint.com/>).

Many artists are also using natural dyes from plants, insects, minerals, and fungi, and there is a lot of information online about how to get, grow, and process the natural pigments. While these dyes tend to fade with time, they are an excellent option and, with proper care, can reasonably last. A great resource is Botanical Colors (<https://botanicalcolors.com/>), in addition of artists, Leslie Rogers

(<https://www.instagram.com/buttflincher/>) and 2026 Salvage Art Summit Speaker Michelle Walker

(<https://www.instagram.com/michellewalkerart/>).