

Background Techniques

Roller, Sponging, Glazing

Supplies you will need



Basic Supplies	
Acrylic Paints	Multi-Purpose Sealer
Large wash brush	Tracing Paper
Acrylic Varnish	Transfer Paper
Glazing Medium	Sanding Sponges
Lint free rag	4" Fabric Roller
Natural Sea Sponge	Shallow roller pan
Paste Wax	Acrylic Varnish
Blue Painters Tape	Lint Free Rags (no color)

The Surface

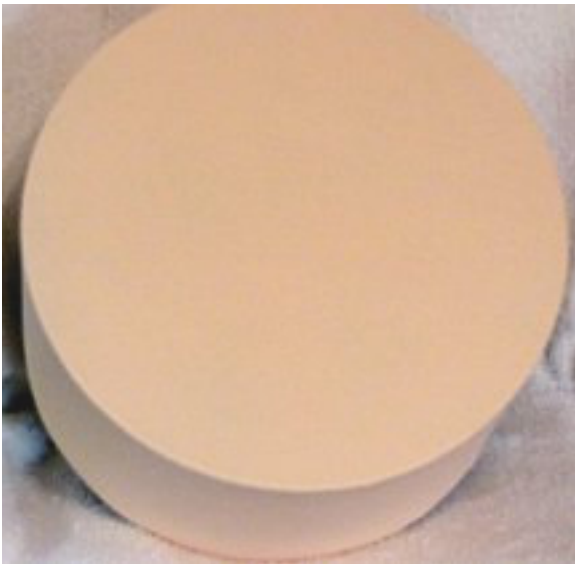
First, you begin with a surface: A popular type of surface is a simple unfinished paper maché box. You will want to make sure the lid does not fit too tightly to the bottom or there could be a fitting problem after the prep and paint layers are applied.

If the lid is a bit on the tight size, try this: take the lid off the bottom and place several layers of waxed paper, large enough to cover the opening to the box bottom and down the sides. Work the lid back on over the box bottom and waxed paper. Allow to sit over night and test the fit again. If the lid still is hard to remove from the bottom, place several more sheets of waxed paper in addition to the sheets you already have and repeat the process. If you are patient you will eventually stretch the lid opening just enough to be able to paint and varnish with no problem of a too tight lid.



Preparing the Box

- ✚ Remove the price sticker from the bottom of the box by using your hair dryer to thoroughly heat the sticker...while it is still hot, peel up slowly. If it is still sticking...heat again until you are certain it has gotten very hot.
- ✚ Personally, I prefer to pre-seal the paper maché box with a good all purpose sealer before beginning to paint. I like to use DecoArt MultiPurpose Sealer but it is wise to use the sealer that is in the same brand as the paints you will be using to decorate the box.
- ✚ Apply the sealer to the inside and outside of the box lid and bottom using a large wash type of brush. I prefer to use a Tilford 1" filbert for this as it holds a lot of sealer and covers a large area quickly and thoroughly. You can purchase this very versatile brush at <http://www.tolemill.com>



- ✚ Be sure to prepare the brush by wetting it completely with clean water then blotting out as much of the water as possible on a paper towel. Pour a small amount of the sealer onto a dry palette (a simply Styrofoam plate will work just fine.) Tip the brush into the edge of the puddle of sealer and pull some out onto the palette. Now, work the brush back and forth in this "loading zone" until you have the hairs thoroughly filled with sealer. Avoid picking up a glob of sealer and not working it into the brush before applying to the surface.
- ✚ Apply the sealer by pressing the brush firmly to the surface and in a criss-crossing motion begin to cover the surface. Reload often and

always work the sealer into the hairs of the brush. Once you have covered the entire box...allow to dry very well. I prefer to let the box dry overnight to be sure the sealer has had ample time to penetrate the surface and cure before proceeding. Be sure to wash and rinse your brush very well to remove all traces of the sealer.

- ✚ Choose your favorite background acrylic color and cover the outside of the lid and bottom with the same brush we used in the sealer stage. You will want to load and work the brush in the same manner as described above. Again, allow ample time for drying of this background color.
- ✚ You may need to repeat this color to get good opaque coverage. Some colors are very transparent and could require several layers. Often adding a small amount of white acrylic to the color will make it better able to give good coverage and I prefer soft pastel colors for the backgrounds on Memory Boxes.

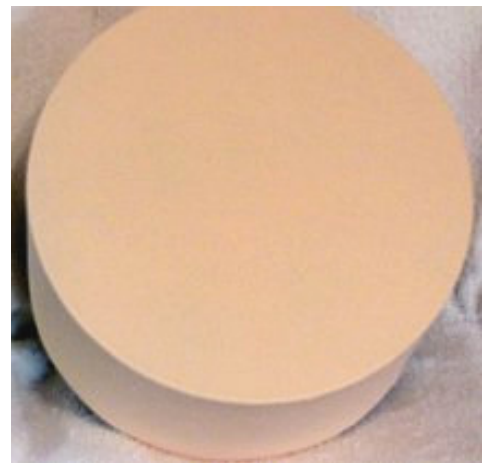
- ✚ I like to do the inside of the box lid and bottom with a metallic gold acrylic as it gives a nice finish with no further work required. Use the same brush and technique as described in the sealer stage.
- ✚ One point to keep in mind is that if you should get bubbles when basecoating, allow the surface to air dry and the bubbles will settle back to the surface.

I sometimes speed up the preparation of the box by mixing the sealer with the background color. To do this you would; mix the sealer and paint in a ratio of 1/3rd sealer to 1 part paint. Apply a mix the same as described in the sealer stage and allow to dry well. You can use a hair dryer to speed the drying time. Then apply one layer of acrylic paint (no sealer) to the surface to get good opaque coverage. Repeat paint color if needed and allow to dry well.

Solid Color - Roller Background Application

I like to use the 4" fabric roller that you can find at most home centers. Any lint free paint roller will work as well.

- ✚ Wet the roller then blot as dry as possible.
- ✚ Place a large puddle of your paint on a dry palette or roller tray. Place the roller into the edge of the puddle and pull back some of the paint to form a loading zone. Roll the roller back and forth in the loading zone to saturate the diameter with paint but do not allow the paint to drippy with paint.
- ✚ Apply the paint by keeping even pressure on the roller as you move in back and forth motion over the surface. Continue to overlap the strokes until you have covered the entire area or began to run out of paint. Reload the roller and continue until the entire box has an even layer of color overall.
- ✚ Allow the box to dry (store the roller in a plastic bag or clean well with dish soap and water while you wait
- ✚ Repeat the color application steps until you have nice even opaque coverage.
- ✚ Be sure to clean the roller well with soap and water when you are done. Rinse repeatedly until no soap come out of the roller. This will make your roller good for many uses.



There are many ways to get a wonderful basecoat of color on the paper mache box; here are a few of my favorites:

Sponging - Background Application

- ✚ Mix a multi-purpose sealer into your acrylic paint on a dry palette. Leave an area that is free of paint on the palette.
- ✚ Soak a clean sponge ...I prefer natural sea sponges but any type will do...in clean water until completely saturated. Wring and blot to remove as much liquid as possible.
- ✚ Grasp the sponge so that you have a good grip on it. Tap the sponge gently into the paint/sealer mixture then move over to the clean area of your palette to pounce the loaded sponge until the mixture is worked into the sponge. Make sure there are no blobs or globs of paint laying on the surface of the sponge.
- ✚ “Pounce” the loaded sponge on the surface moving in a random pattern until the box is fully covered. Reload the sponge as describe in step 3 often.
- ✚ Do not clean the sponge with water until you have completed covering the box or the extra moisture may lift the paint from the box surface.
- ✚ Use a small piece of sponge to get into the corners where the sides of the box meet the bottom

Two-Color Sponging - Background Application

It is fun to do a two-color application using the sponging technique.



have met.

- ✚ Have two puddles of your paint/sealer mix on the dry palette with room for the pouncing on a clean space of the palette
 - ✚ Tip one edge of the sponge into the first color then tip the opposite edge of the sponge into the second color
 - ✚ “Pounce” the loaded sponge on the clean area of the palette. As you “pounce” the sponge you will see the color come together and begin to blend...this is good.
 - ✚ Now you will pounce the sponge on the surface in a random pattern or you may keep one color to the outside edge of the box so that you end up with one color framing the other with a softly blended area where the two colors
- ✚ You may also use plastic shopping bags to pounce color onto your box.

Two-Color Roller - Background Application

- ✚ You can add a second color to get a very attractive two-color background.
- ✚ Prepare and load the roller as described above.
- ✚ Pour a small amount of your second color on a second dry palette...roll just the outside end of the loaded roller in the small puddle of paint then move to a clean area and apply the roller so the colors on the roller blend together.
- ✚ Begin to roll on the surface of the box using a back and forth motion that forms a "W" shape. Pick up the roller, move it back to where you started, and fill in the gaps remaining in the "W" shape.
- ✚ It is fun to experiment with overlapping the roller strokes in different directions to see how the colors blend and leave different patterns.



Rag Rolling - Background Application

Begin by putting a solid one-color background on your box using any method you prefer. Allow to dry well.



- ✚ Apply an even layer of Glazing Medium over this background color. Allow to dry well. Rewet the surface with Glazing Medium and work some color into the wet surface...if needed add medium to your brush as you pick up the color so the surface stays wet.
- ✚ Prepare several old lint free towels by washing and drying but do not use fabric softener in them before the final rinse. Dry well. Bunch and roll the towels so that they have creases and crevasses. (do just the lid top or the box bottom at one time)
- ✚ While the paint application is still wet, roll the towel across the surface. If you want more of the original background color to show through, open the towel and reshape the towel to have clean toweling on the outside. Roll across the surface again.
- ✚ Once you are happy with the look...allow the box to dry very well before proceeding.
- ✚ You may also use plastic shopping bags to use for rag rolling...turn the bag inside out so that any printed text is on the inside. This will prevent any ink bleeding on to the box.



Wet-in-Wet - Background Application



- ✚ We will be using the normal basic supplies used for most acrylic painting projects.
- ✚ Large brush or paint roller, acrylic paint and glazing medium.
- ✚ You do want to wet the roller but then take time to blot as much of the water out of it as you can Pour a small amount of your gesso or paint into a small tray that still leaves room for rolling the roller to force the product into the roller. I like to use a plastic container with low sides...no more than an inch high. This protects my surrounding surface from spatters but also does not interfere with getting the roller well loaded. Tip your roller into the paint or gesso that you have poured along one end of the tray...now rolls the roller several times back and forth in the area of the tray that has not paint. Repeat this at least once more when you are first loading the roller...after that you only need to do this step once for each reload Move to the surface and start in the middle...use quite a bit of downward pressure at you begin to apply the paint.

- ✚ Work in overlapping strokes in a W shaped motion. As you begin to run out of paint in the roller, lighten up on the pressure and allow the roller to go over the paint you have already applied. This step smoothes out any ridges and leaves just the right amount of texture behind for good "tooth".

- ✚ Now...if you will be using a brush to apply your background paint: The steps are very much the same as with a roller...dampen and blot the brush well...tip into the paint then stroke the brush back and forth across the clean area of your dry palette until you've loaded the paint or gesso "in to" the hairs. Avoid leaving any bumps, lumps, blobs or gobs of paint on the outer surface of the hairs These will cause you more problems in getting smooth even coverage with the brush. Again, I start in the middle of the surface area applying the paint in a back and forth stroking motion, allowing the strokes to overlap. As I begin to run out of paint in the brush I will lighten the pressure and gently stroke over the still wet paint to knock down any ridges that may have formed Remember, " If you leave a ridge, you get a ridge as the paint dries." Re-tip and load the brush in the same manner each time you pick up fresh paint. Be sure to basecoat and allow the surface to dry before starting the *Wet-in-Wet* technique.



✚ Speaking of fresh paint, it's very important that your paint be fresh and not have laid out long enough to start to form a skin. So put out small amounts of paint and replenish as needed versus putting out a lot of paint at the beginning. If the paint begins to skin over...put out fresh paint in a clean area of your dry palette. This will save a lot of digging out those little goobers caused by semi-dried paint. When doing a "wet in wet" multi-colored background...you need to start with your lightest color on your roller or brush and cover the entire surface. If the surface is very large you may need to work in sections in order for this first color to stay wet long enough to continue.

✚ Now with the first color still in the brush or roller, tip into a small amount of the next color and roll/stroke a little on the palette. Go to the surface and touch this new color in a random pattern over the wet surface. Now use the roller or brush to blend through this second color to soften and spread out the edges of this color. Do not over do this step or you will end up blending away the second color and mixing it into the first wet layer. The idea is to still see both colors but in a soft blended fashion where they meet. If you are using more than two colors...continue with the next color the same as the second.



✚ Do be careful on the choices of colors. If you happen to choose two colors that are "Complements", you may find that you are getting a brownish gray mix instead of some pretty colors working well together. If you are getting "mud", allow each color application to dry before adding the next color.

✚ You will need to use a glazing medium to wet the surface to simulate the wet paint layer before applying a new color. Just roll or brush on the glazing medium over the entire surface and then load the new color into the roller or brush as describe above and apply the same as above...softening and stretching the color out as far as it will go. Keep in mind that glazing medium will take longer to dry before you can proceed with the next layer...if you don't wait enough time, you may accidentally start lifting the previous layer and leave the "dreaded holes" that are very hard to fill and make look as nice as the rest of the background. You may use a hair dryer when using glazing medium and paint.

✚ Ok, I have given you a lot to think about here. If you have never mastered the *Wet-in-Wet* technique...try practicing on Bristol board or even brown paper bags. Do not be afraid to try different color combinations while you are at it.

✚ You may add layers of different glazed colors to end up with a variegated color background. If you want your pattern, area to remain free of under painting colors: use the low tack painters tape to mask off the area. You may also print the pattern on typing paper, trim around the design, and use the low tack tape in a roll under the cut-out to hold it in place.

This will protect the design area as you continue to apply your background colors. Be certain to allow the background to dry thoroughly before proceeding.

Glazing

Glazing is simply the application of very transparent color layers.

If you have applied a nice background then decide you want to add a few more colors...try glazing.

To make a glaze:

- ✚ Choose the color you wish to work with then mix a very small amount of the color into a small puddle of glazing medium. Choose the medium from the same brand line as the paints you are working with.

- ✚ On a large background area, choose a large soft brush to pick up a small amount of the glaze color and brush it over the area. The glazing medium will extend the drying time somewhat so you will have time to work and move the color around on the surface.

- ✚ Most times, you are looking for a soft transition of this color so that there are no harsh edges to the applied glaze. Use the clean side of the brush to soften any harsh edges. If you are glazing over a smaller area, choose a smaller brush and apply as described above.



Almost any surface is suitable for roller, sponging and glazing techniques, as long as the surface is prepared properly. Here are a few other surfaces and their preparations.

Paper

Sanding is not necessary in order to paint on paper. Be sure to apply at least one layer of paint or sealer to the paper before doing any of the background techniques described above.

Wood and Ceramic Bisque and Porcelain Bisque

Supplies Required For Preparing these surfaces:

1. 3M Sanding Sponges (Medium and Fine Grit)
2. Tack Cloth or Damp Lint Free Fabric Cloth
3. DecoArt Multi-purpose Sealer
4. Background Acrylic Paint
5. Sand your board very well using first the medium and finally the fine sanding sponge.
6. Use a tack cloth to remove the sanding dust. Just **“glide”** the cloth over the surface, no pressure. You want to remove the sanding dust but not leave any of the oil or wax in the tack cloth on your wood.

7. Apply one coat of Multi-purpose Sealer mixed with your background color half & half (1:1), to the entire surface, front, back, edges, etc.
8. Sand your wood very lightly with the fine sanding sponge. Use tack cloth to remove the sanding dust.
9. Apply two more coats of the background acrylic color - let dry well and dry sand between coats. Always use your tack cloth after sanding.

Glass and Metal

For Metal and Glass Surfaces, begin by cleaning the surface well with mild soap and water. Wipe dry and give the surface a good cleaning with Rubbing Alcohol. Let dry very well and do not handle the surface with your hands if at all possible. Apply several layers of Krylon 1315 Spray Primer (check the numbers in the bar code on the back of the can and make sure it ends with 1315). Allow each layer to dry well before applying the next layer. Allow these layers to cure overnight in a cool dry environment. Sand lightly if needed then apply the prep layers as described in #2 above. Our background color for this design is DA190 Winter Blue by DecoArt in the Americana line.



Stretched Canvas

Pre-primed stretched canvas is ready to paint. There are many grades and textures in pre stretched canvas. The smoother and higher the quality of the canvas will make a difference in how your paints and brushes work. I prefer the standard pre-stretched canvases, as I like to have some tooth for my brushes to work against and for my paint to bond. If you prefer to work on a smoother surface you may wish to go with the portrait smooth or even linen like stretched canvases. You will find that these will be a bit pricier than the standard canvases.

It is easy enough to smooth out the less expensive standard canvases by applying several coats of basic white gesso. Let each layer dry well. Do not use a hair dryer when using Gesso as this can cause cracks in the ground. Sand after the third layer and remove all sanding residue before continuing. It is always good to have a good ground that is completely dry before hand.

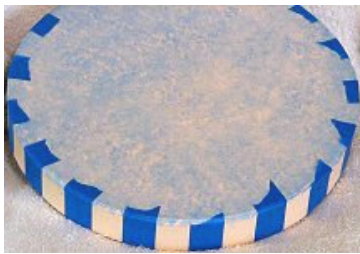
Transferring the Pattern

Choose a good quality Tracing Paper and Graphite Transfer paper.

-  First, trace the design using a soft lead pencil on a translucent tracing paper then place the tracing on the lid and align it where you wish it to be placed. You may want to trim away the excess paper from around the design to make it easier to see the placement of the design in relation to the box. Use a small piece of blue low tack painters tape (found at any home center store) to secure the tracing to the lid.
-  Slide the graphite tracing paper under the tracing making certain that the correct side is facing down to the lid of the box. If necessary test by making a small mark with your pencil on the transfer paper to see which side needs to be against the lid to make the transfer. Use a stylus, dry ballpoint pen or a “Sharpie **Extra** Fine Marker” (**not** the “Ultra Fine”) and retrace over the lines of the pattern.

- ✚ Gently lift the edge of the tracing and graphite paper to see if the transfer has been successful.
- ✚ Remove the tracing and transfer paper carefully so you do not smear the surface. Lift the tape off slowly so it will not cause a lifting and tearing of your box lid. If the tape seems to be sticking...use your hair dryer to heat the tape and then lift gently while the tape is still hot.
- ✚ If the lines of the transfer are very dark, you will want to use a kneaded eraser to remove some of the excess graphite to lighten the lines. Please do not skip this step as it is very hard to get good coverage of a too dark transfer and you may regret the extra work needed to cover those dark lines.

Paint the design as instructed in the pattern packet or book.



Do not forget to decorate the sides of the box and lid.



A simple vertical stripe made by using the low tack tape and filling in with one of the

colors used in your background technique is a simple but nice finish to this area of the box. You could add some simple dip dots in a straight line or five-petal dip-dot flowers.

Finish the inside of the box with as much care as you do the outside. A solid coat of color is fine. I like to use the tip Marie gave and use a metallic gold for the interior of the box. Make sure you varnish the inside and allow at least overnight drying with the lid off so that the odor is not too strong and that the lid does not stick.

Varnishing

To protect your work, it is important to varnish the finished project. This also makes the surface easily wiped clean. Once the design is completed, give it time to dry well and then apply a couple of layers of good acrylic based varnish.

Varnish using that trusty Tilford Phylbert brush and the same loading and stroking motion described in the sealer stage. (Did I tell you this brush is versatile?) Keep in mind that you want your varnish brush fully loaded so that you are applying a wet even layer of varnish but do not be tempted to brush back through the varnish because it will begin to tack up almost immediately.

My favorite way to varnish my decorate box is to use Final Coat Acrylic Varnish which is applied with a lint free cloth. I save all of my husbands worn out white t-shirts for just this purpose. There are many locations to purchase Final Coat but it is not sold in the large chain stores. I carry this wonderful product in my webstore at <http://www.we-r-art.biz> , as do many others. Do a search online for “Final Coat”

Finishing Touches

As a last precaution, to prevent damage to the Paper Mache box lid and box, apply a bit of paste wax (*choose a good quality wax such as Johnson's Past Wax*) to the inside lip of the lid before placing it on the box bottom. When the lid needs to be removed, the wax will prevent sticking and possible tearing of the box bottom.

It is also a good idea to wax other surfaces with paste wax as an added layer of protection to humidity and contaminants in the air. Be sure to allow the final varnish to cure for several days before applying and buffing on wax.

Once a year or so it is a good idea to thoroughly clean the object with mild dish soap and rinse well with a clean damp cloth. Allow to dry then reapply the wax.