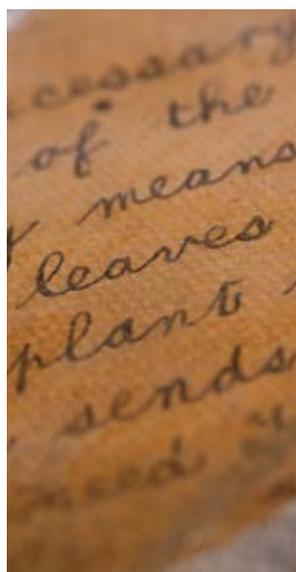


*Confront your fears, list them, get to know them, and only then will you be able to put them aside and move ahead.*

*Jerry Gillies*



# List the leaves

Decoupage with dried leaves, foiling, shellac and pewter embossing.

When planning ideas, workloads and schedules I tend to 'leave the lists' to my beloved co-author, so I decided to surprise her here with this project called 'list the leaves' as a canny twist as well as a mixed media procedure list. You can make up your own procedure list for yourself or for a painting group. If you are ever stuck for ideas, this is fun to do and a good way of channelling ideas, processes and pieces into a single creative outcome.

I have a large collection of bits and bobs as well as experience of techniques to use, but groups can organise these as a lucky draw. Brain storm briefly and write a list of suggested mixed media and techniques. Cut the list into as many items as there are members of your group. Each draws one from the pool and brings enough relevant materials and tools to share. Group work is much more stimulating and varied with exciting and creative results as each member encourages development of the other. Decide on the order of techniques you will follow and tick each item off the list as you go – plan to glue and write your list into the final collage.

I managed to work leaves into my list. If you would like to try copying my efforts you will not get the same results, but ...

## You will need

- **Techniques list:** Mine incorporated pasting, drybrushing, tearing, leafing, stamping, painting, foiling, printing, shellac varnishing, pewter embossing
- **Tools list:** Varnish brushes, brayer, stamps, pewter ball tool for embossing (or an old crochet hook and dry ballpoint pens), sheet of glass, clean paper, credit card
- **Tackle list:** Canvas supports (I recycled old rejected acrylic paintings by painting them with white acrylic first), real leaves (dried for texture and fresh for leaf prints and rubbings – I used beautiful castor oil leaves but any strongly veined leaf will do nicely – you could also incorporate skeleton leaves), leaves from letters, books and magazines (about leaves), metal leaf (I used gold and silver), leaf stamps, acrylic gel medium, white acrylic paint, gold paint stick, turpentine (as solvent), grey/black printing ink, shellac, denatured alcohol (methylated spirits), metallic fibre-tip pens,





large fibre-tip glue pen, foil, 3D metal leaves (bought or created using pewter or aluminium – coffee can lids or seals are wonderful (for recycling), silicone glue



1. Paste the smooth side of your dried leaves with gel medium and glue these face down randomly to the canvas. Use more gel medium on the veined side to smooth the leaves down well using a varnish brush. Work out any air bubbles at the same time. Leave to dry. (I decided to use a second canvas as I had enough dried leaves and the composition would be more interesting.)



2. Drybrush the canvases all over with white acrylic. The leaf veins will stand out and show their texture as the layers of drybrushing increase. Stop before you blot out the veins in a snowy field of white paint.

3. Tear the paper leaves from books and magazines – I found old advertisements for castor oil which were a nice touch – and glue them randomly to the canvases as well, with the gel and brush. Allow to dry.



4. Paste gel medium thinly in random patches over the leaves and gaps. While still wet, cover lightly with metal leaf. Use a dry varnish brush to pat the leaf down onto the gel medium. Do not rub. Allow to dry for at least an hour and then gently rub off excess metal leaf.



5. Stamp dark grey leaves in patches over sections of both canvases. Stamp several times off one inking so that you get lighter prints. Re-ink the stamp with gold ink and stamp over and around the grey leaves.

6. Drybrush more white over the stamping to soften and blend the images into the background. Rub a little gold paint stick here and there and soften by blending with a little turps.

7. At this point I rotated the canvases to decide which way they would group together best.

8. The combinations were becoming dull so I decided to tear up my original list and incorporate it. Each piece was pasted in place with more gel medium.

9. Provide some textural contrast by leaf printing. Ink the plate of glass and press flattened fresh leaves into the ink. Place leaves in position on the canvas, cover with clean paper and roll lightly with the brayer to print vein patterns over and between the actual leaves.

10. Shellac flakes dissolved in denatured alcohol make a lovely gold varnish which dries quickly. Paint this around and between the edges of the original pasted leaves, allowing them to show up against the varnish.





11. Scribble some writing – I wrote my listed objects – down the side of both canvases using gold and silver fibre-tip markers.

12. Brush the glue pen lightly over the surface relief of the veins and textures on the canvases. Wait until the glue dries tacky and then foil these as highlights. This adds a lively sparkle particularly when viewing the work from the side as the foiled areas catch the light.

13. Add 3D pewter leaves for the finishing touch. These are simple to make: trace around small leaves onto the wrong side of your pewter and cut out each shape. Draw the main vein lines on the wrong side of each leaf using a pencil. Lightly indent finer lines and toothed edges using a darning needle. Cover each pewter leaf on the wrong (indented) side with silicone glue using a credit card. Press them into place, wrapping some carefully over the boxed edges of the canvases where necessary. Wipe off the excess glue before leaving them to dry for a few hours.

**Note:** I could have added patina to the pewter to darken it and then polished the leaves leaving the darkened areas in the spaces between the veins, but I felt they needed to be shiny so left them as they were. The final effect is as gently muddled and pictorial as lists become in my head.

