

Squared Away

Made by Jenn Mason

Finished size: 5½" × 5½"

Techniques used: paints (page 6), burning (page 17), lacing (page 17), collaging (page 16)



The Lutradur was a challenge to work with, because it falls somewhere between fabric and paper. I loved how the paint was absorbed but didn't bleed, which allowed me to go crazy with my colors while still keeping a bright, unmuddied palette. The kid in me also enjoyed melting the Lutradur, and it took all my willpower to keep from watching the whole piece melt away.

—Jenn



materials

See page 62 for sources of supplies.

- Lutradur scraps
- Golden Fluid Acrylics: Quinacridone Violet, Green Gold, Cobalt Blue, Burnt Sienna
- Golden Soft Gel medium
- Found text and map paper
- Found hinge and screws
- Pigma Micron Pen (Sakura)
- Heavyweight artist paper (watercolor or printmaking work nicely)
- Butane lighter (the long kind for candles and fireplaces, not a cigarette type)
- Tongs or tweezers
- Plexiglas palette
- Paintbrush
- Painter's rags or paper towels
- Scissors
- 5" × 5" picture frame (optional)

method

See pages 6–26 for techniques.

1. With a paintbrush, cover small sections of the palette with fluid acrylic paints. Press small pieces of the Lutradur into the paint, letting some areas pick up more paint than others (page 6). Repeat on the other side of the Lutradur. Let the Lutradur pieces dry.

- 2.** Crumple the Lutradur pieces into balls, and then open them flat. Use more fluid acrylic paints and a rag to add more color where desired. Rub the color in with the rag to get more saturation of color in random places.
- 3.** Cut the Lutradur into the approximate shapes.
- 4.** Using tongs or tweezers, carefully hold an ignited butane lighter under a piece of Lutradur just until the material starts to melt. Do not let it burn or the color will change.
- 5.** Flip over the Lutradur, and melt the front as desired. You can get different depths by melting or not melting the front and back of the piece.
- 6.** Melt around the edges of the background and the foreground where desired.
- 7.** Add any remaining touches of fluid acrylic paints as needed to highlight the melted areas. Let the Lutradur dry completely.
- 8.** Use the soft gel medium and a paintbrush to glue the found pieces of text to the artist paper. Cover the paper with soft gel medium, and add the prepared pieces of Lutradur. Don't press the Lutradur flat. Leave some lift to create dimension.
- 9.** After the soft gel has dried, use the Pigma Micron Pens to add hand-drawn details.
- 10.** Use soft gel medium to adhere the screws and the hinge. Do not move the piece until it is dry.
- 11.** Frame as desired.



Lutratur and paper collage

Lacing

Lutratur disintegrates when subjected to high heat—use this to your advantage! Use a heat gun to selectively dissolve areas, producing an organic lace effect. Lutratur disappears quickly if overheated, so be sure to do a few test pieces before you work on your actual project.



Under normal use, the heat from an iron is not sufficient to melt Lutratur. It takes the high, concentrated heat from a heat gun or heat tool.

The more heat you apply, the more the Lutratur will shrink, stiffen, and curl before it melts and disappears entirely. If you need your finished piece to be flatter and somewhat softer, you can iron it after lacing.



Amount of lacing increases from left to right. Notice how Lutratur shrinks with more heat and lacing.



Laced and beaded Lutratur

What to Do to Prevent the Lacing Effect

A heavy or thick application of paint, acrylic medium, or embossing powder will act as a resist, barrier, or mask to the heat, thus preventing lacing.

Burning

You can melt, singe, carve, or cut into Lutratur with a heat tool or soldering iron to create artistic cutouts, decorative edges, and free-form organic shapes. I use the Creative Textile Tool by Walnut Hollow, which comes with a pencil tip for general use and a mini-flow tip that works for burning the most delicate shapes and writing. The tool includes a handy on/off switch and a rest stand for the hot tip when the tool is not in use.



Burn edges and designs on painted Lutratur with Creative Textile Tool. Clean tip on a wood block.

Heat-Safe Work Surface

The back of a cookie sheet or a smooth, glazed ceramic tile make great heat-safe work surfaces for drawing and burning shapes or words into Lutradur.

Safety first! There is no residue or ash when you burn Lutradur. Although Lutradur is non-toxic, you should still work in a well-ventilated area. Use precaution when working with a heat tool so you do not burn yourself or any area that may come in contact with the hot tool tip. This includes being careful with the cord—protect the cord so that it will not catch on anything (or anyone), causing the hot tool to fall from your work surface.

1. Lightly draw on the Lutradur the shapes, writing, or areas you wish to burn out. Use your drawing as a guide while burning. Or you can work freehand, designing or sketching as you go. Remember to leave breaks and create connectors, just as you would when cutting a stencil, so that your letter O, for example, does not become a big hole.

2. Plug in and turn on your heat tool. Let it heat up before you begin to work on the Lutradur. Rest the tip on a stand or protected surface, such as a ceramic tile or a small block of wood.

3. When working on the interior of the Lutradur, place the tool tip where you wish to burn. (I use the tapered point tip for this purpose.) If working along the edge of the Lutradur, use the side of the tool tip. Keep in mind that when the tool is completely heated, burning will be instantaneous. Therefore, you should work on a practice piece until you feel comfortable and in control.

Making Decorative Holes

Tiny decorative holes can be created by lightly and quickly touching the tip of the textile tool to the Lutradur. Be sure to hold the tool at a 90° angle to get perfect circles.

4. As you work, residue will begin to build up on the tool tip. If you see a charred look on your burned edges, clean the hot tip by scraping and rubbing it along the edge of a scrap block of wood. When you are finished, or before the next time you burn Lutradur, clean the cold tip by rubbing it with steel wool.



Negative shapes created by burning Lutradur



Positive shapes created by burning Lutradur

Burning Lutradur with a Flame

Burning Lutradur can also be done with a real flame from a candle, torch, or gas stove. Hold the Lutradur with kitchen tongs, and work over or next to a sink or bucket of water in a safe, controlled area. Although with a real flame, you don't have the control that you do when using a heat tool, this technique does work in a pinch.

Gluing and Fusing

Gluing

Some glues work better than others when gluing Lutradur—and some do not work at all. Choose your glue based on what you will glue the Lutradur to. Refer to the chart on the facing page for recommendations.