

Monotype and Beyond

Gelliplate monotypes

Working in watercolour, gouache, acrylic, slow-dry acrylic medium and Golden Open acrylic. Smooth paper yields the most predictable results as do thin, evenly rolled layers of colour. Natural fibres, plants, fabric, string etc, cut stencils and texture making devices such as rubber stamps, bubblewrap and suchlike can all build up interesting marks.

Contact monotypes

Working on perspex with thinly rolled ink - lino/block printing ink, a stiff Akua mix or similar work best. Smooth, thin paper and wet ink transfer the most ink... thick, rough paper and thin ink transfer least. There are many variables so its useful to make test swatches before committing.

Painterly monotypes on Gelliplate or Perspex

on gelliplate: as above

on perspex: with a free-flowing ink such as Akua mixed with blending medium to create a very loose texture.

Applying the ink/paint in a very free manner with a brush, roller or any other device, wiping away with cotton buds, rags etc. Building up layers by making multiple passes onto the plate.

Chine Colle

Application of collage element which is applied underneath the ink either by glueing to paper before printing or laying glue side up onto the printing plate before pressing printing paper down on top. Tracing paper, stencils and masks can all be helpful in working out where the chine colle should be placed and you can try multiple variations before glueing.

It could form many layers in its own right, cover the entire printing paper surface or merely be a small element. Areas can be masked out to protect from further over-printing or "knocked back" with a subtle wash of colour if they have become too dominant/disjointed.

Ghost prints

Making a second pass (or more) with paper to pick up any remaining ink on the plate. These often yield a positive image to a previously printed negative and allow a few similar images to be created.

Try re-inking or wiping selectively onto a plate after the first print to manipulate the ghost.

Collagraph Relief Prints

Printing from a constructed collage block. Raised areas will print, cut away or lower areas will not. (Collagraphs can also be intaglio printed like etchings in which case the reverse is true and ink prints from the lowest areas – a press is required for best results with this). Mountboard makes an ideal base on which to work and can be bonded to wood for extra rigidity. Card, board, thin string etc can all be bonded to it to create line and texture.

Think about how the paper will sit on the surface as it is being printed, big fluctuations in height of the surface of the block may not print as easily.

It can be sealed with varnish or PVA and printed with lino/block ink or a stiff Akua mix or similar onto a variety of papers by hand-burnishing with a spoon or baren. Additional marks can be

made by scraping back into the PVA or varnish once semi-dry or piped on in patterns with a nozzle, glass outliner can be useful for this.

General pointers to keep in mind

You are almost always working in reverse so will have to think “backwards” about lots of things!

Use of positive and negative, there is lots of scope for controlling where the ink ends up whether by inking the plate selectively, wiping back or masking out areas. Think about keeping quiet areas to contrast busy ones.

Colours can be mixed on the paper as well as on the palette, eg. Print yellow onto half a sheet of paper then blue onto the other half allowing a little section to overlap and you'll create a strip of green.

Transparency allows the greatest degree of colour mixing through layering colours and for building up marks. It can take the edge off bright white paper applied as a very thin wash of colour.

Opacity can block out or “knock back” unwanted elements, build up stronger areas of colour and deep tone.

Mark-making can really influence the look of a piece, do your marks have life and movement? Are there a variety of different types of mark, subtle and bold, textural or linear? And is there a contrast between quiet passages and busier ones within the work?

Adding and subtracting is a continual process on the plate and on the paper to build layers, conceal and reveal.

Masking out can preserve an area you like while work progresses around it. Stencils can become collage elements in their own right once an interesting patina of ink has built up on them.

Registration (making sure the paper always lands in the same place on the plate) can be done in a number of ways, by eye, using a drawn guide under the plate, taping paper in place or making a registration sheet on which plate and paper have marked areas to sit.

Nothing is ever a waste...its just finding a way to use it! Its like having a conversation with the work and sometimes letting it lead you in different directions. And with each “mistake” we keep learning.

Useful suppliers and resources

<http://intaglioprintmaker.com>

<http://www.lawrence.co.uk>

<https://www.jacksonsart.com/>

<http://www.johnpurcell.net> (paper)

<https://printmakerscouncil.com>

Youtube and google...obvious but great for picking up new ideas.

Main Print Studios in Scotland

<http://www.edinburghprintmakers.co.uk>

<http://www.dca.org.uk/visit/print-studio>

<http://www.gpsart.co.uk>

<http://www.peacockvisualarts.com/printmaking>

<http://highlandprintstudio.co.uk>

Gelliplate recipes

If working out how much mix you need to fit a specific tray the easiest way to work it out is fill tray with water to the same depth as you want the gelliplate, by using a measuring jug to fill the tray its easy to keep track of how much liquid is needed.

To make a plate approx 20cmx20cm:

approx 70g gelatine powder
200ml water
200ml glycerin

Mix gelatine into hot water, stir until thoroughly mixed then heat in a microwave or saucepan on medium heat.

Once hot, well mixed and runny stir in glycerin (it will go a bit lumpy/glutinous) and continue to heat until of a smooth pouring consistency.

Carefully pour into tray. Allow any remaining mix in the pan/bowl to harden and then scrape into the bin then rinse pan with plenty of hot water. Do not pour any mix down the drain, it will block it!

Any bubbles on the plate surface can be skimmed off with a piece of paper.

Allow to set for a couple of hours in a cool place, can be moved to a fridge to speed the process up once firm enough.

Or

approx 30g vegegel power
approx 20g agar agar
200ml water
200ml glycerin

Dissolve agar agar in warm/hot water and vegegel in cold water then combine. A higher quantity of agar agar will make a firmer plate. Will set within 20 – 30 minutes.

Gelatine and vegegl easily available on the baking aisle of supermarkets.
Boots stock 200ml bottles of glycerin in the coughs and colds section.

Agar agar (and both of the above) easiest found online eg. Amazon but some Asian and wholefood shops sometimes stock it. All of the above also available from baking goods wholesalers.