



Cross Training: Mono-printing Basics

These tips work whether you are using a plexiglas sheet, a commercial gelatin (Gelli) plate, or a gelatin plate you made yourself. The main objective is to try everything that occurs to you, and have fun doing it.

Tip: Make notes about the process as you work. Note successes and failures, preferences and dislikes, and ideas for future experiments. Don't lose a single good idea!

Assemble these supplies:

Substrate

gelatin plate, plexiglass sheet or other surface as described in the tutorial on monoprinting

Paints

acrylic craft paints, tube acrylic paint, textile paint, fluid acrylic paints (Try whatever you have on hand. Dyes will embed in the Gelli plate and also in the gelatin plate, so keep that in mind. The dye won't hurt anything, but you can't get it out, either, and it might be a distraction.)

Paper or Fabric for Printing

Using smooth papers and fabrics results in a cleaner, more complete print than textured papers or fabrics. Hot press watercolor paper, for example, prints, but the texture of the paper breaks up the image being printed.

Additional Supplies:

- DELI paper, which is available online and also at restaurant supply, is perfect for prints that can be collaged over other prints later in the collage/assembly stage.
- Newspaper is useful as a means of clearing old paint from the surface prior to re-inking.
- Book pages and printed papers are also candidates for actual printing.
- Brayer to apply paint. I thought a foam roller or brush would be just as good as a brayer, which is slightly pricey. I was wrong. ***IMPORTANT: A good brayer generates a thin application of paint and the thinner the paint on the surface, the more detail the print will pick up.***

- Foam brushes, pencil eraser, Q-tips: and any other object that could be used to draw lines in wet paint, or remove paint selectively from the surface
- Freezer paper or acetate sheets: Cut these and use shapes to mask areas of the plate either before or after printing.
- Objects: rubber stamps, flowers, leaves, wooden or plastic shapes, bubble wrap, textured plates, burlap, rug canvas. If it has a texture and can be pressed against the inked plate, it's a candidate for printing.
- Stencils: Cut these from card stock and spray with acrylic spray to make them waterproof, or use any commercial stencil.

TIP: Look through magazines for elements that would make interesting silhouettes.

Photocopy or tear out the magazine pages and fuse the paper page to cardboard. (Hint: cut out the small, interior parts prior to cutting out the outline or silhouette of the shape.) Spray these stencils with acrylic sealer to make waterproof elements to use several times.

- If you own a Silhouette cutting machine, it will definitely be your friend on this project. Use it to cut intricate shapes from card stock, or clear acetate, and then seal as needed.

AND NOW IT'S TIME TO PRINT!

Follow These Steps:

1. Ink the plate using selected paint and the brayer. No brayer? Apply a thin coat of paint with a foam brush or roller.
2. Draw into the wet paint, or impress objects into the surface. When you like what you've got, lay a sheet of paper carefully over the wet paint and press down gently. Smooth in all directions and keep pressure on the light side so the ink won't smooch.
3. Pull the paper up. Voila! That's the basic strategy. Now you can begin the real play and work of printing. The experimentation.
4. Allow the print to dry, paint side up.

Tips:

1. If the print is faint, the paint may be drying too quickly. A product called "retarder" slows down the drying time, so you have more time to work. Don't confuse "extender" with "retarder." Extender is used to turn paint into a glaze, but it doesn't slow drying time.
2. If the print is faint, you may not have applied enough paint.

3. If the print is indistinct or smooshed, apply a thinner coat of paint next time. If paint is too thick, it won't print a clean image.

4. After the first print is pulled, a ghost image remains. Use Deli paper to take advantage of the opportunity for another print.

5. Clean the surface between prints to keep new prints clear and crisp. Paint residue isn't a bad thing, necessarily. If a subtly grungy look is what you're after, don't clean the plate, just keep going!

6. At the end of the printing session, clean the plate with cool water and a sponge. A plexiglass surface should clear completely, as should the Gelli plate. A gelatin plate can be cleaned as long as there aren't any gouges or cut marks in it. Clean gently with cool water and a sponge, (environmentally friendly) or with baby wipes.

Ideas for Exploration:

- Print smooth layer of color. Mark into the color. Cover a portion of the print with a mask (paper or transparency) Take the print. Set aside to dry. Re-ink in a new color and pull up the mask to expose the first color. Print again. Allow these to dry and then print additional images after the first layer of paint is dry.

NOTE: The simple directions above represent an endless approach to printing, as well as the key to making complex, interesting prints. Generate a number of "backgrounds." Allow to dry and then introduce additional printing on top of what's already there.

- Try thin paints, paints mixed with extender to produce glazes, and different colors applied to the surface at once. Work to fill the entire surface gradually with masks. Try printing a series of thin layers on top of layers (after the paint dries each time.)
- Apply a smooth layer of color. Put a stencil down over the color and use a damp-dry sponge to remove color from the exposed parts of the stencil. Ink with a second color OVER the stencil. Remove the stencil to expose a two-color surface. Apply paper/deli paper to capture pattern.
- Apply a smooth layer of color. Impress leaves and flowers into the surface. Take a print- the leaves and petals will act as a mask. Put aside the first print, pull up the leaves and petals carefully, to expose the veins and details of the natural elements. Make a second print of these elements.

- Rather than clearing the plate each time, add more paint to the surface as you work, so that remnants of color remain on the surface.
- Use a series of masks to block parts of the plate as you print. If this is approached strategically (make the plan in advance) it's possible to print an image with "registered" elements that when taken together, create a composition that's complex and intriguing. Watch the videos we share as Curated Content to pick up ideas and be inspired!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jane", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.