

Techniques for Printing on Fabric

FREE TUTORIALS FOR DIY SCREEN PRINTING, MONOPRINTING & MORE



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HEIDI MIRACLE-MCMAHILL

Printing on fabric is one of the easiest ways to create your own unique textiles. In this free eBook, *Techniques For Printing on Fabric: Free Tutorials for*



DIY Screen Printing, Monoprinting and More, you'll learn how to make a silk screen, how to screen print, gelatin and collagraph

monoprinting techniques, and more.

Learning how to screen print may seem intimidating, but it doesn't have to be. In "Super Simple Silk Screening: Surface Design with Everyday Supplies," Enid Gjelten Weichselbaum shows you everything from how to make a silk screen, to how to make a design, to printing on fabric. You'll be silk screening at home in no time.

Thermofax screen printing techniques are also easy, as Lynn Krawczyk demonstrates in "Thermofax Printing: Easy Methods for Unconventional Surface Design." She shows how to screen print with paint and how to use screen printing screens with discharge paste, thickened dyes, and Xpandaprint.

In "Flight of Fancy: A Gelatin Monoprint Process," Frances Holliday Alford takes you through the gelatin printmaking process, from how to make gelatin plates from scratch through constructing an art quilt from the monoprints.

Cynthia St. Charles turns monoprinting techniques into "Child's Play" with finger painting on fabric. She uses a glass plate technique and a gelatin

printing technique to get her results, which are free and fanciful.

Collagraph printing (also known as collagraph printing), is an easy, low-tech monoprint process. In "Collagraphs: Monoprinting with Texture Plates," Heidi Miracle-McMahill offers tips on how to create a plate, printing, paint choice, color selection, and more

DIY screen printing and monoprinting is fast, fun, and creative. With *Techniques For Printing on Fabric: Free Tutorials for DIY Screen Printing, Monoprinting and More*, you'll have no excuse not to print on fabric anymore.

Warmly,

VIVIKA HANSEN DENEGRE
Editor

Quilting Arts

MAGAZINE*

TECHNIQUES FOR FABRIC PRINTING FREE TUTORIALS FOR DIY SCREEN PRINTING, MONOPRINTING & MORE

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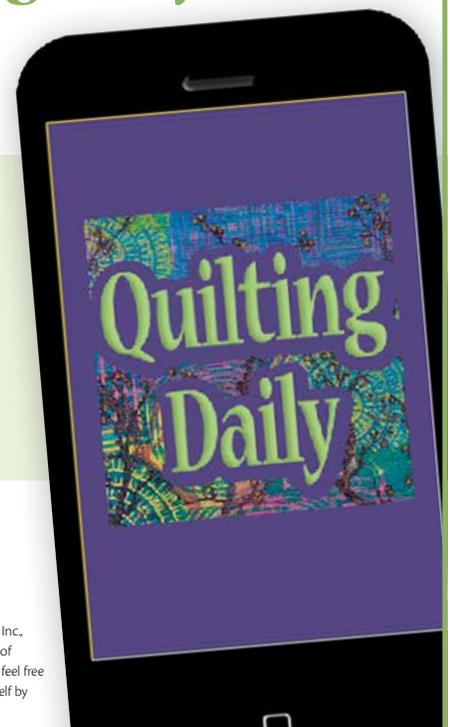
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ADAPTED FROM
 QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
 DECEMBER 2010/JANUARY 2011

super simple silk screening

SURFACE DESIGN WITH EVERYDAY SUPPLIES



"Four Fall Trees" • 14" × 8½"

Not so long ago, while wandering through my favorite art supply store, I came across the silk screening section. I was entranced by the technique, but felt that the process seemed very complicated. And since I like to experiment with new techniques before investing too much in materials, I figured out this super simple variation on the process, which allowed me to experiment with supplies that are easily available in local craft and fabric stores. The resulting fabric has lovely crisp images, and is soft and easy to hand or machine stitch.

BY ENID GJELTEN WEICHSELBAUM

MAKING A SILK SCREEN FRAME AND SQUEEGEE

1. Remove the metal pieces, glass, stand, and any other bits from your picture frame. You will only need the wooden exterior. Make sure 1 side of your picture frame is flat and smooth; this will be the side



TIP: Since one edge of the squeegee will be used to spread the dye, it is best to use a ruler and a rotary cutter or utility knife to cut this edge. You can use scissors to cut the rest of the squeegee.

CREATING A DESIGN AND STENCIL

- that lies against the fabric while printing.
2. Cut your organza or other sheer fabric 3"–4" longer than the frame on each side. I like to use pinking sheers to avoid a lot of fraying.
 3. Lay the frame in the center of the fabric, flat side down. The fabric should extend about 3"–4" beyond each side of the frame.
 4. Fold 1 edge of the fabric 1"–2" back so it is resting on the frame. Staple or tack the fabric firmly down on the back of the frame; the staples or tacks should be about 1"–1½" apart.
 5. Repeat this folding and stapling on the opposite side of the frame, pulling the fabric as taut as possible without tearing it.
 6. Turn the frame 90° and repeat Steps 4 and 5, working on opposite sides until the fabric is tight as a drum and there are no wrinkles.
 7. To create your squeegee, cut the craft plastic a little smaller than the width of the narrowest inside dimension of your frame. For example, if the opening of your frame is 5" × 7", cut the squeegee to 4¾" wide. The height of the squeegee should be big enough to hold onto (in this case, about 3"–4").

1. Think of a design that you would like to print. Keep in mind that it must be no larger than the inside opening of your frame, and a simple design is best since the image will come from a stencil process. If you wish to print in multiple colors, you will need to design a separate stencil for each color.
2. Cut a piece of self-adhesive vinyl slightly larger than the outside dimension of the picture frame. With the paper backing still on the sheet, cut out your design with a craft knife on a cutting mat. The parts you remove will be where the image appears, just like a stencil. For example, if you want to print the letter O, in addition to cutting the outline of the O from the vinyl, you will also need to cut a separate vinyl circle for the center of the O and adhere it to the screen so that you are not printing a solid round shape.

Note: You can either freehand cut your design on the vinyl with your craft knife, or trace the design before cutting. Remember that if you draw on the vinyl side, the resulting stencil will be a reverse of the printed image. If you draw on the paper side, the image will be direct.

MATERIALS

- Unpainted wooden picture frame
- Piece of organza or drapery sheer, several inches larger on all sides than your frame (You can use any fine, sheer fabric that has an even and tight weave, will not stretch, and will stand up to paint and water.)
- Scissors
- Stapler or tacks
- Piece of flexible craft plastic small enough to fit inside the frame (This will be used for making a squeegee; it should be about the thickness of a credit card, though not as stiff.)
- Self-adhesive vinyl covering, such as Con-Tact®
- Craft knife, rotary cutter, or other cutting tool (An X-ACTO® knife works well.)
- Ruler and cutting mat
- Protective cover for your work surface
- Fabric for printing (tone-on-tone or solid; washed, and dried without a dryer sheet or fabric softener)
- Detergent
- Silk screening ink (I like Plaid® Simply Screen™ Printing Paint. It comes in squeeze tubes so there is less waste, and it is available in lots of luscious and lustrous colors.)
- Masking tape
- Iron and ironing board
- Heat-resistant pressing sheet

Optional

- Prepared silk screen frame and squeegee (if you'd rather not make your own)
- Pinking shears
- Bone or bamboo folder

3. Lay the prepared stencil flat on your work surface, vinyl side down. Beginning at 1 corner of the

vinyl and continuing across the top edge, peel back the paper a couple of inches and fold it back flat.

4. Place the frame screen-side down against the exposed adhesive, centering the stencil. Press firmly against the adhesive.
5. Gently reach under the frame and pull back the rest of the paper, taking care not to tear or disturb the vinyl. Reposition the stencil if necessary, and add in any extra pieces, such as the centers of Os or other open designs.
6. Burnish the vinyl onto the organza by pressing and rubbing with your fingers or the edge of a bone or bamboo folder. You want the stencil well sealed to the screen.

PRINTING

1. Select a piece of solid or tone-on-tone fabric on which to print. Wash your fabric and dry it; do not use a dryer sheet or fabric softener.
2. Tape the fabric to a protected surface so it is taut and will not shift. Place the silk screen frame vinyl-side down so that the design is in the desired location on the fabric.
3. Squeeze or spoon silk screen ink into the printing area of the frame. A 5" × 7" opening needs 2–3 teaspoons of ink, depending on the design. Excess ink will be squeegeed away.
4. Using your squeegee, firmly work the ink back and forth, and from side to side of the inside of the frame, spreading it very evenly.



"Fall Trio" • 16½" × 26"

5. To remove the frame, gently lift it straight up off the fabric, taking care not to smudge or slide the frame and blur the edges of the design.
6. Place the frame in a new location and print again, adding a little more ink only if necessary. Take care not to lay the frame over a newly printed area; this will get ink on the vinyl and transfer it to the next printing area. (If you do get stray ink on your vinyl, you can wipe it off with a damp cloth to avoid smudges and smears.) When printing multiple colors or incorporating different designs on a surface, allow the first image to dry before adding the next print.

Note: A vinyl resist will not stand up to very many printings, but it will provide several, especially if your design is simple and the vinyl is securely stuck to the screen. Eventually, the moisture of the ink will degrade the adhesive and allow the ink to spread. However, you may like the way the design changes as the vinyl nears the end of its use.

FINISHING

1. When you have made all the designs that you can (or want to) print, simply pull off the vinyl and discard it. Wash the squeegee and frame in warm soapy water. Leave the sheer fabric stretched on the frame; once the frame and fabric have dried, they can be used again and again.

TIP: Clean up immediately after finishing your printing. The ink will become permanent or at least very difficult to clean up after it has dried.

2. Allow your printed design to dry completely, and then heat set it with a hot iron and a heat-resistant pressing sheet (to avoid transferring any ink to your iron). ♦

enidgjelten.com

experiments WITH *thermofax* printing

BY LYNN KRAWCZYK

EASY METHODS FOR
UNCONVENTIONAL SURFACE DESIGN

My obsession with screen printing revolves around the humble Thermofax screen. These silk screens are created using a Thermofax machine, an old photocopy technology. They are incredibly easy to use and

play well with a variety of printing mediums. In this article, I discuss printing with screen printing paint, discharge paste, Presist water-based resist, thickened dyes, and Xpandaprint.

"Perched" • 10" × 10" quilt, mounted on 12" × 12" canvas • Hand-dyed fabric; Thermofax screen printing and hand stitching.

Process photos by Jacqueline Lams

ADAPTED FROM
QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
DECEMBER 2010/
JANUARY 2011





Depending on the medium, I use either a sponge brush, paintbrush, or plastic scraper to print my image. I use different techniques with the different mediums in order to achieve a variety of effects. Try out some of these variations—you'll be a screen printing maniac in no time flat!

PRINTING WITH PAINT

I classify printing with paint into two categories: “solid printing” and “scuff printing.” Solid printing creates a complete bold print of the image, while scuff printing produces ghost-like images that are ideal when you are creating layers or backgrounds for your work.

SOLID PRINTING

1. Cut about 1" off the end of a sponge brush to make it more stable. Lay the Thermofax screen smooth-side down on your fabric. Hold the screen in place by pressing down along the duct-taped edge on the top of the screen.
2. Squirt paint onto the screen, and brush the paint across the image on the screen with the sponge brush. (Figure 1)



3. Pull back the screen to reveal the image. (Figure 2)

SCUFF PRINTING

This kind of printing produces partial, light images that add depth to your fabric. The steps are the same as for “Solid printing,” except you squirt only a small amount of paint onto the screen, then brush lightly across individual areas rather than the entire image. (Figures 3 and 4)

REPEAT PRINTING

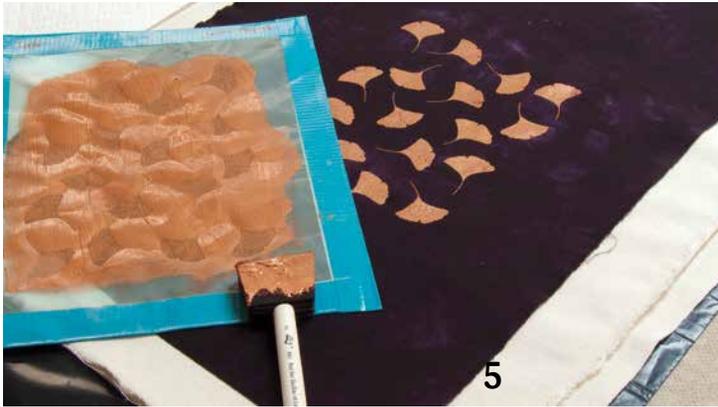
“Repeat printing” refers to creating a repeated pattern of the same image, but it doesn't have to look uninspired. And with the following approach, it's possible to produce prints that don't have specks of unwanted paint without having to wait for the paint to dry in between prints.

MATERIALS

- Thermofax® screens (You can purchase prepared screens or create your own with a Thermofax machine.)
- PFD (Prepared for Dyeing) fabric
- Sponge brush
- Paintbrush
- Squeegee or plastic spackle tool
- Plaid® Simply Screen™ Printing Paint
- Jacquard® Discharge Paste
- Presist™ water-based resist
- Jacquard Dye-na-flow® paint
- Superclear liquid dye thickener
- Procion® MX Fiber Reactive Dyes
- Xpandaprint
- Heat gun
- Protective gloves
- Respirator
- Paper towels
- Soft sponge and large bucket for washing your screen
- Protective cover for your work surface
- Iron and ironing board



1. Start by printing an image in the center of the fabric, following the basic procedure for “Solid printing.”



2. Lay the screen down for the next print, overlapping the screen onto the edges of wet paint from the previous print. As long as you don't reposition the screen, the paint won't smudge. Be sure to hold the screen in place along an edge that is not lying across the wet paint. (Figure 5)
3. Print your image and pull back the screen. Before you create another print, check the edges of the duct tape and the back of the screen for any paint spots. If there are spots, place the screen paint-side down on a dry paper towel and wipe off the unwanted paint.
4. Repeat steps 2 and 3 until you've covered the entire piece of fabric, working from the inside and out toward the edges. Print the image at different angles to create movement in the print, and print off the edges of the fabric to create a more organic design. (Figure 6)

TIP: If you are doing a repeat print over a large piece of fabric, you may have to pause partway through and wash your screen to prevent dried paint from clogging the screen.

DISCHARGE PASTE, PRESIST, AND SUPERCLEAR THICKENED DYE

Thermofax screens are not just for paint; you can screen many other mediums through them. Since the

CAUTION: Always work in a well-ventilated area, as many of these mediums give off unpleasant odors. When working with dye powder and discharge paste, make sure you also wear gloves and a respirator.

mediums I'm addressing here are more fluid than most screen printing paints, you need to use the more traditional

ADDITIONAL *information*

PRESIST: PRINTING THEN PAINTING

Presist has a thinner consistency than other water-based resists, which makes it easy to print through Thermofax screens. It also remains an amber color when dry so it's easy to see the areas you've printed. Since Presist acts as a resist on fabric, you can paint the fabric around it and it will repel the paint, preserving the original color of the fabric underneath. However, for this technique to work, it's extremely important that the Presist soaks into the fabric when printing. You can check by lifting up a corner of the fabric to see if it has soaked through to the other side. If not, put the fabric back down and pull the squeegee across the screen again.

Since Presist is a water-based resist, you cannot submerge it in a dye bath. This means you have to paint on thickened

dye or a highly pigmented paint like Dye-na-flow after you've printed your image. It's best to paint up to the edges of the printed design rather than across the resist. (Figure 9) Allow the paint or dye to dry, and heat set it according to the manufacturer's directions (Presist can stand up to heat and steam). Soak the fabric in warm water to remove the Presist.

DISCHARGE PASTE

Discharge printing refers to removing color from fabric through the use of a bleaching agent. Using Jacquard's Discharge Paste is a super easy way to create discharge patterns in your fabric. Simply screen print using the discharge paste, and then allow it to dry completely. Iron your fabric with lots of steam and watch your pattern appear!



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preparing *superclear* thickened dye

Superclear is a dye thickener similar to sodium alginate. It comes mixed and ready to use, and you can add dye solution or dye powder to it. The more liquid you add, the thinner it becomes, so you will need to experiment to get the level of fluidity that suits your needs.

My preference is to add about ½–1 teaspoon of dye powder directly to ⅔ cup of Superclear. I find that this creates a good consistency for printing without the need for any additional liquid. See “Caution” at left for safety issues.

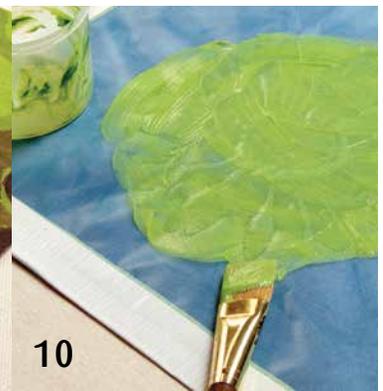
TIP: When working with dye, be sure to soak your fabric in soda ash prior to printing. Batch and launder the printed dye as you normally would.

form of printing: spooning the medium into the well on the screen and pulling with a squeegee or plastic scraper. (The well of a silk screen is the solid area of the screen above the image through which the medium cannot flow.)

Note: The accompanying images show printing with *Presist*, but the same



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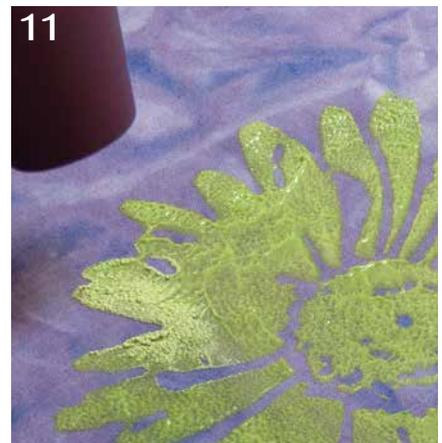
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steps also apply to discharge paste and thickened dye. If you are using thickened dye, read “Preparing Superclear thickened dye” before beginning.

1. Place the screen on your fabric and spoon medium into the well of the screen.
2. Hold the screen in place and use your squeegee or plastic scraper to pull the medium across the screen. (Figure 7) You may need to make 2 passes to be sure that the medium soaks into the fabric. (Figure 8)

TIP: Don't push hard on your screen; *Thermofax* screens are not indestructible, so it's better to make several passes.

3. Wash your screen out as soon as you are done printing. These mediums are harder on the screens



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than paint, and allowing them to dry will damage your screen.

4. Allow the medium to dry completely on your fabric, and follow the directions on the bottle for any additional steps. Also see “Additional information.”

working with *thermofax* screens

- Store Thermofax screens flat; a crease can form if they are folded.
- If you have a commercial fabric that you are no longer fond of, try printing it to create a whole new design.
- Make sure you heat set your prints before laundering them.
- Always use paint that is formulated for screen printing. It stays wet longer, and regular acrylic craft paint will damage your screen.
- Never let paint or other mediums dry on your screen. Screens should be washed with plain tepid water and a soft sponge. Avoid scrubbing; a gentle washing will make the screen last longer. Blot your screens dry with paper towels, or allow them to air dry before printing with them again. Never soak your screens in water.



"Perched" • 10" × 10" quilt, mounted on 12" × 12" canvas • Hand-dyed fabric; Thermofax screen printing and hand stitching.

PRINTING WITH XPANDAPRINT

Xpandaprint is a puff paint that adds wonderful texture to fabric. It comes in both white and black. You can color the white paint before printing, or paint it after it has puffed.

5. If you are coloring your white Xpandaprint before printing, start by mixing it with with a textile paint that is darker than the color you are trying to achieve.

For example, to get lime green, use a dark green paint. White Xpandaprint will significantly lighten the color of the paint that is mixed with it.

6. Use a regular paintbrush to apply Xpandaprint to the screen. (Figure 10) The light touch of the paintbrush allows the paint to penetrate the screen onto the surface of the fabric, but prevents it from being pushed into the fabric.

7. Remove the screen, heat the Xpandaprint with a heat gun according to the manufacturer's directions, and watch the paint puff. (Figure 11) Be sure to work quickly and do not let the Xpandaprint dry before you heat it.

TIP: For repeat printing, print and puff 1 or 2 images at a time. You may have to take a break to wash out your screen if you are working on a large piece of fabric. ♦

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'flight OF fancy'

A GELATIN MONOPRINT PROCESS

Several years ago, I spent an afternoon doing gelatin monoprinting with a small group of fellow art quilters. I had a general idea of the process, but had never tried it. We each started with a very stiff, circular slab of gelatin, stiff enough that light hand pressure did not even dent the surface. Each of us worked in our own way. We added paint to the gelatin surface, or "plate" as it is also called, and by gently smoothing fabric over the painted surface, we were able to lift one-of-a-kind monoprints. The paint adhered to the fabric, making an interesting, unique image that could not have been achieved by a direct paint method. It is a process that is spontaneous, creative, and exciting.

M A T E R I A L S

- Gelatin, unflavored, such as Knox®
- Water
- Saucepan and measuring cup
- Heat source
- Pie pans or other round containers
- White cotton fabric
- Backing fabric
- Fabric paints
- Fabric markers
- Sharpie® or Pigma® Micron® pens
- Brayer and/or paintbrushes
- Polyester batting, high-loft
- Thread in a variety of colors

We worked all afternoon, and when I left, I had a large stack of circular prints on 12" squares of white cotton fabric. I spent the next several days adding color using marking pens and paints. And when the prints screamed for it, I started machine quilting. The edges started ruffling from the tension of the machine stitching and from the extra thread. I liked the three-dimensional forms that this added to the surface design.

I laid out the forms in a series and found that they could cover a large space, just the right size for the 2006 Husqvarna Viking "Imagine That!" contest. My entry, "Flight of Fantasy" was a finalist and traveled for a year throughout Europe. It was recently



BY FRANCES HOLLIDAY ALFORD



returned to me, and I've enjoyed reminiscing about its creation.

I have never admitted to knowing exactly what the shapes are. Sea forms? Fireworks? Flowers? Chihuly glass? Mexican fiesta skirts?

MAKE GELATIN PLATES

1. Use 2 envelopes of household gelatin per 1 cup of water. You will probably need at least 4 cups of water and 8 packets of gelatin for a good-sized plate.
2. Measure the cold water into a large saucepan.
3. Add the gelatin powder and allow it to soften in the cold water.
4. Heat the water and gelatin until it is boiling. Stir regularly, and do not allow it to boil for a long time as it could scorch the gelatin.
5. Remove from heat and stir.
6. When all of the gelatin has dissolved, pour the liquid into pie pans or other round containers.
7. Refrigerate until the gelatin is cool and gelled into a stiff surface.
8. Remove from the refrigerator, and loosen the edges of the gelatin from the pan.
9. Turn the container over onto a fabric or paper surface, and carefully remove the gelatin plate.
10. Let the plate sit for a few minutes to allow it to dry. Otherwise, it will be wet and slick from condensation.

Note: A mixing bowl will make an interesting humped "plate"; a flat pie pan will make a flat, round plate.

TIP: If there are bubbles on the surface of the gelatin, they may be removed by dragging a piece of newspaper across the top surface.

Note: If you want a particular shape, different from the pan shape, the plate can be trimmed, cut, or carved.

PRINTING

1. With the gelatin plate on a dry, clean surface, such as paper or cloth, apply fabric paint to the



surface of the plate. Paint may be applied with a brayer, a brush, or your hands. You could also just squeeze paint onto the plate, as I did.

2. Lay a piece of white cotton fabric over the painted gelatin plate and smooth the fabric in place, moving from the center out in all directions.
3. Lift the fabric from the plate and allow the fabric to air dry face up.
4. Add more paint to the plate and continue to make prints. Or, continue to print without adding paint; this is called ghost printing. The second print will be similar to the first, but it will likely be less dramatic.

Note: Some artists like to allow the paint from prior printings to remain on the plate, as this creates more texture and detail. Others prefer to start with a fresh plate each time. To clean your gelatin plate, spray some water onto the plate and gently rub the surface with a wet sponge. Alternatively, if the gelatin plate is strong enough, it can be lifted from the paper or cloth surface and gently rinsed under slow running water.

CREATING TEXTURE

GOUGING, MASKING, AND MUTILATIONS

If you would like texture in your monoprint, there are several ways that you may do this.

- Add an item to act as a mask to the paint below it. Threads or string will prevent paint from adhering and create white lines in the

painted surface. Cut paper, leaves, and other flat objects may be used as masks to leave unpainted areas.

- Gouging or breaking your plate gives the piece a different look. Smaller pieces of the plate may be isolated and used as stamping tools by painting on them and applying them directly to the fabric surface.
- An alternative to tearing the gelatin plate is to use a cookie cutter or a knife to make a more formal shape. Cutting into the plate will leave places where extra paint will sit, allowing darker lines to appear on your fabric.

SECONDARY PAINTING AND EMBELLISHMENT OF PRINTS

After the monoprinted fabric is dry, enhancements may be made.

- Fabric markers and/or direct paint application are options for enhancing the color and design.
- Shiva® Paintstiks® could be added as a textural accent by rubbing them over a textured surface.
- A second pass through the monoprint phase with the gelatin plate is another effective way to create more texture and visual interest.

Note: Always heat set the prints before construction. Ironing the print after the paint is dry is sufficient. Alternatively, a larger print can be placed in the dryer for 30 minutes for heat setting. If you use Paintstiks, you will need to allow your piece to cure for 3–5 days before heat setting. Always remember to practice good safety habits. Iron in a

ventilated area and use a respirator.

CONSTRUCTION PROCESS

Each piece is constructed as a separate unit.

1. Use batting and a backing fabric and lightly pin all 3 layers together to create a fabric sandwich.
2. Baste the pieces together so that it will not shift as it is stitched.
3. Using a satin stitch, sew all around the irregular edges several times. Trim away any excess from the edges of the circular forms.
4. Free-motion quilt each unit, starting from the center and working out. I found that making satin-stitched spirals from the center out to the edges was an effective way to add bright thread work. I also used straight stitches, radiating from the center, to emphasize the starburst pattern of these forms.
5. When all units are completed, spread them out on a design board with the edges overlapping, and pin the units together.
6. Attach 2–3 units at a time, using machine stitches that imitate or match the stitching on the edges of the individual units.
7. Continue to attach units until the entire quilt is assembled.

Note: A binding is not necessary, as the satin-stitched edges of the separate units are already finished.

8. Add a sleeve at the top of the back. By arranging the top row of the quilt carefully, the sleeve may be completely obscured from the front of the piece.
9. Add a label with the title and your contact information, and be sure to sign it.

Note: If you want to further embellish your quilt, beads or floss embroidery could be considered. I chose not to do this as I felt that there was enough color and action without it.

This process is very forgiving, very flexible, and very spontaneous. There are as many varieties of production

as there are artists making art. Each one brings a different color palette, a shift in shape, and variation in stitch patterns, thread colors, and attachment techniques.

“Flight of Fantasy” arrived back at my house in Austin, Texas, after having visited cities that I still dream of visiting. It had been held up in customs once and was a well-seasoned world traveler when it returned home. I took a close look at it. I still am not sure what the forms represent. I leave this to your imagination. ✨

franceshollidayalford.com

other considerations

- If you do not have time to make a gelatin plate, try smoothing paint onto the shiny surface of freezer paper and print from that surface.
- If you use fabric to protect your work surface, the fabric may become an interesting print of its own as paint is applied to the gelatin plate. Brush excess paint onto the fabric, clean your brayer, and use it to wipe up spills. You may like the patterns you create very much. Heat set the fabric, and it could be used in a separate project, as an addition to this project, or as the backing fabric for the separate units.
- Further print enhancement may be done using other print methods. Putting paint on a layer of Bubble Wrap® and printing that over the first monoprint would be an interesting addition. Single stamps of simple shapes could be added, too. If you choose to add a second layer of paint, be sure that the first layer of paint is dry to maintain crisp images.
- If your gelatin plate gets torn, too dry, or too dirty, you may reconstitute it. Put the pieces in a colander and rinse them gently to remove some of the paint. Transfer the pieces into a microwaveable container and add a little water if it has dried or become too stiff. Microwave the gelatin until it liquefies—only a few minutes—watching it carefully, then pour the melted gelatin back into a container and let it cool in the refrigerator again. It will give you another smooth surface. The pieces of dried paint will sink to the lower surface where they can be ignored, scraped off, or used for a textural element.
- Keep the gelatin in the refrigerator between uses. It will last several weeks.
- Do not ever put the gelatin plate in the garbage disposal or otherwise allow it to get into the plumbing system. It can create a big problem. Rather, put it in the garbage can or in your compost bin.



child's play

MONOPRINTING TECHNIQUES FOR FINGER-PAINTED FABRIC

ADAPTED FROM
QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2011



I always thought of finger painting as child's play until recently when I met Parks Reece, a protégé of Ruth Faison Shaw—the originator of modern finger painting in Italy in 1926. Ruth started a movement to use finger painting as a therapeutic tool in psychiatry and patented her formula for finger paint by 1935. Within a year, finger painting was introduced to the general public by Crayola®, which began mass-producing and marketing Shaw's paints to children. Over time the gestural, expressive form of finger painting attracted adult fine artists, and finger painting as a fine-art medium grew to receive worldwide attention from galleries, collectors, and museums.

BY CYNTHIA ST. CHARLES



MATERIALS

For plate-glass technique

- Glass or acrylic glass (Caution: Wrap the edges with tape if using glass, as the edges may be sharp.)
- Paintbrushes and sponges
- Snug-fitting protective gloves (latex or rubber)
- Fabric (cut 2" larger than glass plate)
- Paints or inks prepared for fabric
- Paper
- Damp cloth

Left: "Fingerprints #4" • 14" x 11"
Finger-paint monoprint using plate-glass technique.

DIRECTIONS

Today Parks Reece uses finger painting, along with lithography, to create unique artwork. As I admired the gestural quality of the finger-painted art in his gallery, I began to wonder how I might create a similar process on fabric.

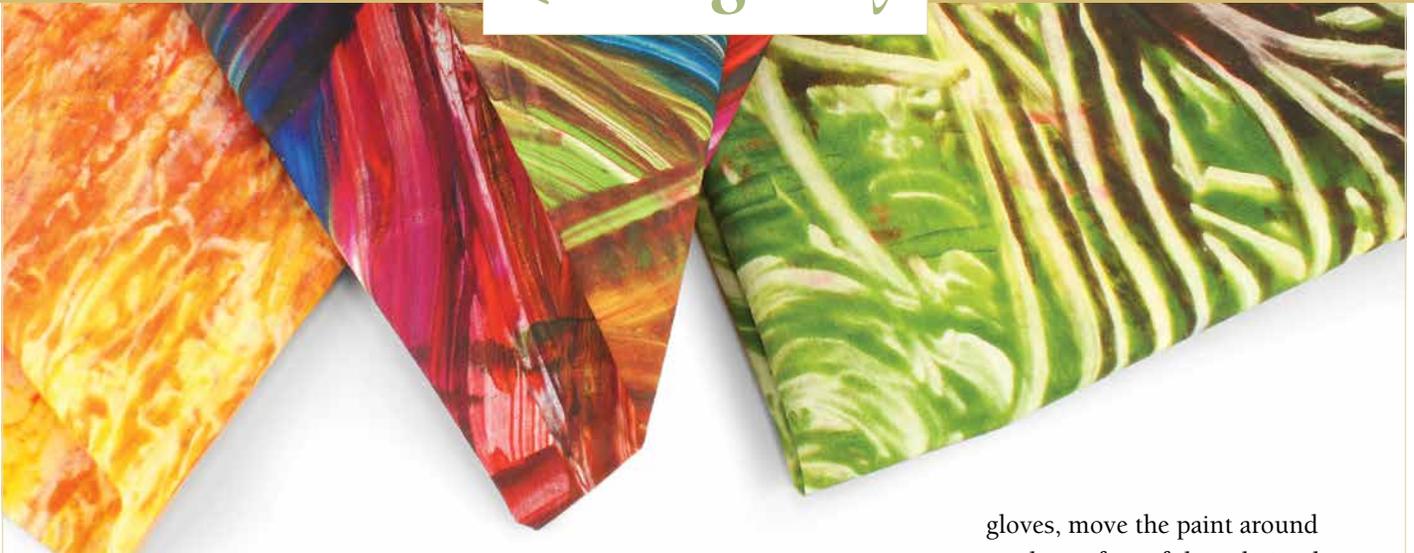
I remember finger painting on slick paper as a child. Finger painting directly on fabric seemed impossible due to the texture and absorbent quality of fabric. However, it is possible to create the look of finger painting on fabric using monoprinting techniques. Through experimentation I discovered that three monoprinting approaches work great to create the look of finger painting on fabric.

PLATE-GLASS TECHNIQUE

1. Apply paint to the glass or acrylic glass surface using a brush or by dribbling as desired.
2. Wearing protective gloves, move the paint around on the surface of the glass using your fingertips or the palm of your hand until you are pleased with your image.
3. Lay your fabric carefully over the finger-painted surface and smooth it out, allowing the fabric to absorb the paint or ink. Place a sheet of paper over the fabric and gently smooth it with your hand. (This step will help absorb any paint that bleeds through the back of the fabric.)
4. Carefully lift your fabric from the glass surface. (It is usually possible to get only a single good print when using the plate-glass technique.)



TIP: Between prints, you can wipe the glass clean with a damp cloth to remove any paint that remains. (Or leave it and add more paint for an interesting effect on the next print.)



M A T E R I A L S

For gelatin-plate technique

- Unflavored gelatin
- Water (room temperature)
- Large pot
- Hot plate or stove
- Measuring tools (tablespoon, cup measure)
- Large stirring spoon
- Container with ½" sides
- Rubber gloves
- Fabric (cut to size, a bit larger than gelatin plate)
- Paintbrushes or sponges
- Paints or inks prepared for fabric (I use Pebeo Setacolor transparent paint, Speedball® fabric ink, and Jacquard® Lumiere® fabric paint.)
- Paper

GELATIN-PLATE TECHNIQUE

1. Prepare the gelatin several hours in advance. To calculate the amount of water needed for your container, pour enough water into the container to measure at least ¼" deep. Pour the water into a measuring cup to see the amount. Measure 2 rounded tablespoons of powdered gelatin per 1 cup of water. (These amounts will equal 1 cup of cooked gelatin.)
2. Put your calculated proportions of water and gelatin into a large pot. Stir gently over medium heat. Try to avoid making bubbles. If bubbles appear, skim them off, as you want the gelatin to be clear and fully dissolved. When the gelatin is completely dissolved, pour it gently into your pan with the ½" sides. Do not move the gelatin container until the gelatin has set up. (This will take several hours or overnight.) There is no need to refrigerate the gelatin; it will set up at room temperature.
3. Apply paint or ink to the firm gelatin surface by dripping or dribbling. Wearing protective gloves, move the paint around on the surface of the gelatin plate using your fingertips, palm, or the side of your hand.
4. Place your fabric carefully over the finger-painted surface and smooth, allowing the fabric to absorb the paint. Place a sheet of paper over the fabric and gently smooth it with your hand to absorb the paint that may bleed through.
5. Remove the paper and carefully lift your fabric from the gelatin surface.
6. You can make a second or even a lighter third print with additional pieces of fabric, or you can overprint to create more intricate designs.
7. To clean the gelatin plate and remove all traces of paint after printing, lay another sheet of paper over the surface, rubbing gently. The paper will remove all final traces of the print and even make a nice soft print on your paper.

TIP: *Fabric paints contain powerful binders that make it difficult to remove from skin and under fingernails. Wearing gloves that fit snugly will enable you to manipulate the paint without staining your hands.*





"Firestorm #10" • 8½" × 6½" • Finger-painted monoprint using plastic-sheeting technique, Pebeo Setacolor transparent fabric paints, and Speedball Fabric Ink on cotton broadcloth; screen printed, machine quilted.

PLASTIC-SHEETING TECHNIQUE

1. Tape the corners of a heavy plastic sheet to a smooth work surface.
2. Apply paint to the plastic surface using a brush or by dribbling as desired.
3. Wearing protective gloves, move the paint around on the surface of the plastic sheet using your fingertips, palm, or the side of your hand until you are pleased with your image.
4. Place your fabric carefully over the finger-painted surface and smooth it out, allowing the fabric to absorb the paint or ink. Place a sheet of paper over the fabric as you gently smooth it with your hand or another firm object. (This step will

MATERIALS

For plastic-sheeting technique

- Smooth sheet of heavy plastic sheeting (the slick side of freezer paper also works)
- Masking tape
- Smooth work surface
- Snug-fitting gloves (latex or rubber)
- Fabric (cut to size of work surface)
- Paintbrushes and sponges
- Paints or inks prepared for fabric

help absorb any paint that bleeds through the back of the fabric.)

5. Carefully lift your fabric from the plastic surface. (It is usually only possible to get a single good print when using the plastic-sheeting technique.)

TIP: *Between prints, you can wipe the plastic surface clean with a damp cloth to remove any paint that remains. (Or leave it and add more paint for an interesting effect on the next print.)*

FINISH

To finish, set your fabric according to the paint manufacturer's instructions. Keep in mind that if you substitute commercial finger paints for the recommended fabric paints, you will need to take extra care to protect your work. Commercial finger paints will print on fabric, but are not permanent. They are designed to wash off the skin easily, and wash out of fabric easily. Gel medium, applied to the front and back of the fabric, will seal it, but will not make it lightfast. ❀

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ADAPTED FROM
QUILTING ARTS MAGAZINE
OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2009

collagraphs

MONOPRINTING WITH TEXTURE PLATES

Though I enjoy the results of traditional printmaking, I did not like the long processes involved and I really thought printmaking might not be for me. That is until I discovered collagraphs. Loosely defined, a collagraph is a print made from a collage. I was fascinated with the idea and wanted to translate the effect to my fiber art. I did some experimenting to perfect my monoprinting, and I learned a few things (see *Strategies for Success*). But my biggest discovery was foam sheets! I was frustrated when objects on the print plate moved as I tried to print and remembered the self-stick foam I had used with my children. I started by using the foam for the shapes on a Plexiglas® base and quickly discovered that I could use the foam sheet as a base plate as well. I liked the way the foam released the paint, and I liked that I didn't have to wait for any glue or sealer to dry as I had to do with traditional methods.

Foam sheets are not the only material I use in my collagraphs, but more often than not I now use a foam sheet as my base plate. It is an inexpensive alternative and makes the process quick and easy. You can cut shapes to collage onto the plate and you can draw/etch into the foam itself.

DIRECTIONS

1. Sketch out your design on paper. I work spontaneously but know that many artists prefer to lay out a design on paper first. Keep in mind that you have to be able to cut

out what you have drawn, so keep it fairly simple.

2. Cut your desired shapes from the adhesive-backed foam sheets and arrange them on the large foam sheet.
3. Once you are happy with the arrangement, begin peeling off the backing and sticking the pieces onto the

MATERIALS

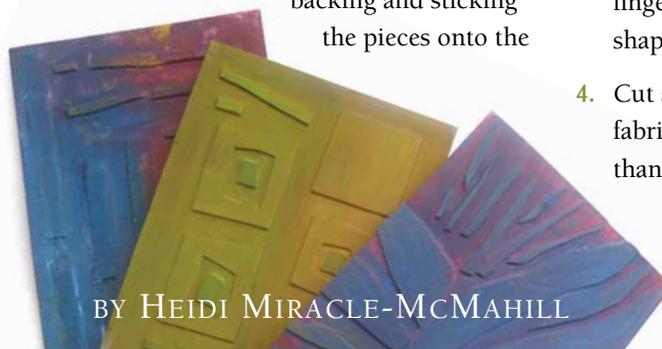
- Foam sheet for printing plate, 9" × 12" or 12" × 18"
- Sticky-back foam sheets for cutouts
- Prepared-for-dyeing (PFD) cotton fabric cut into 15" × 18" or 16" × 24" rectangles (I use PFD fabrics by Robert Kaufman Fabrics, including Corona Cotton Canvas Bleach White, Pimatex, Kona®, and Panda.)
- Acrylic paint
- Small mist sprayer (I use the small travel-size bottles.)
- Paintbrushes
- Brayers
- Iron

Optional

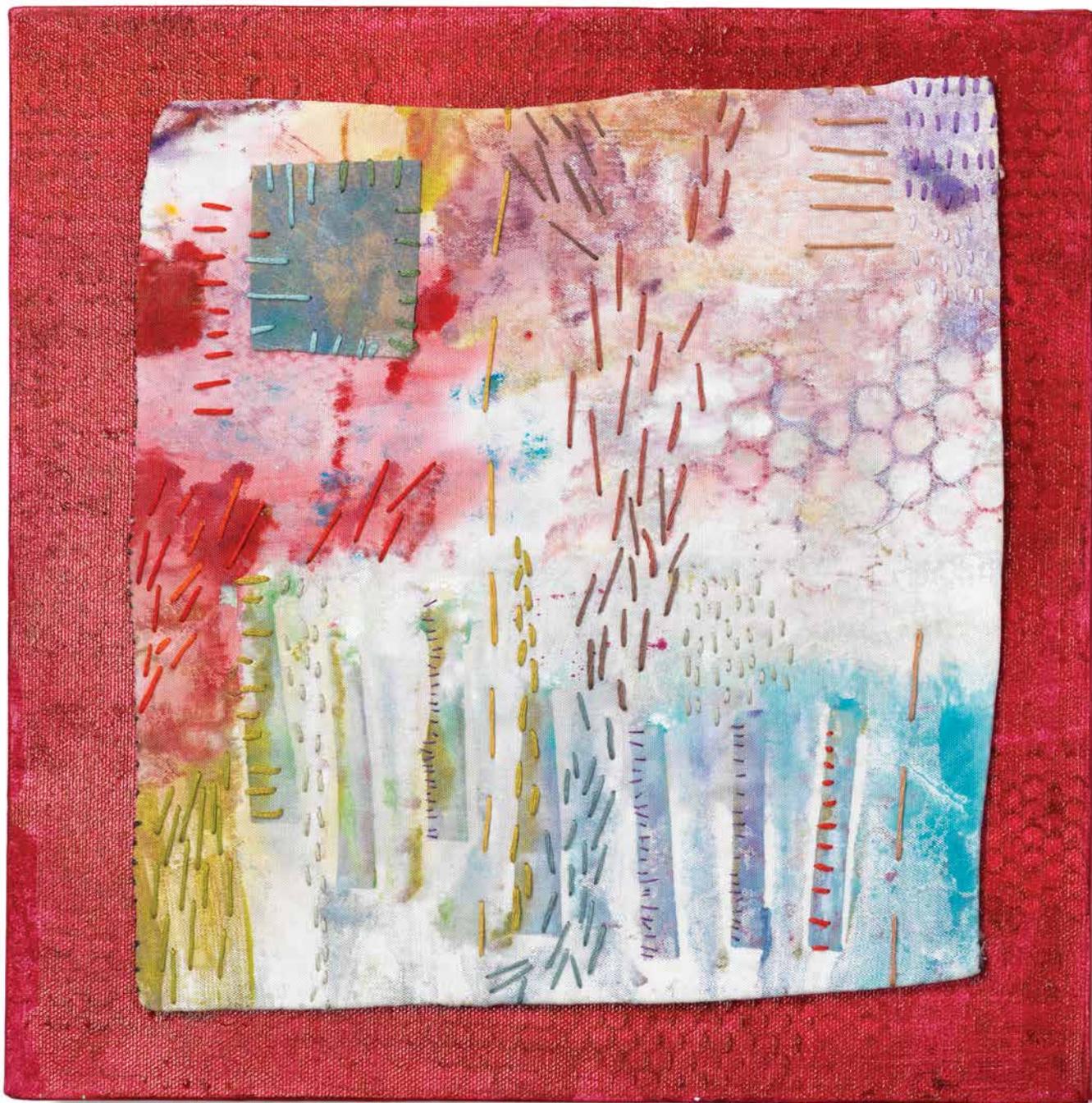
- Colored pencils
- Stiff interfacing for batting
- Embroidery floss
- Gallery-wrapped primed canvas
- Pointed tool (wooden stick, the end of a paintbrush, letter opener, stylus)

background sheet. Leave enough space so that you can get your fingers in between the cut-out shapes.

4. Cut a piece of the PFD cotton fabric 2"-3" larger (on all sides) than your printing plate.
5. Apply paint to your collagraph foam plate using a brush, a brayer, or



BY HEIDI MIRACLE-McMAHILL



"Construction I" • 12" × 12" • Acrylic paint, cotton fabric, colored pencil, Lutradur®, embroidery floss.

even your fingers. You can leave white areas, blend areas together, etc.

TIP: Make sure your paint is not too thick or you will get "blobby" prints on your fabric.

6. Mist your paint just a bit with a fine-mist sprayer. Use only enough

mist to keep it wet and to help release the paint without making it runny (unless you want that effect).

7. Carefully place your dry fabric on top of the plate. Do your best to square it up so that you have

a consistent straight border on all sides (much harder than it sounds). Once you lay it down on the paint, it's usually not a good idea to move it.



strategies for success

PRINTING TIPS

Two problems I encountered were paint drying on the printing plate and paint bleeding on the fabric. I learned:

- Mist the fabric just before printing is helpful for getting the paint to release.
- Laying dry fabric on top of the paint and then misting it from the back prevents bleeding problems.
- Misting rather than wetting the fabric gives you more control.
- Using my hands and fingers to apply pressure to the print plate works better than anything else I tried.

PAINT TIPS

- Working with Open Acrylics from Golden® helps as these paints stay wet much longer than traditional acrylics.
- Some printmakers use Createx™ Monotype acrylic paints and Monotype base, specifically formulated for printmaking.
- I have had fine results simply using acrylic paints and fabric inks, including Setacolor, Golden, Versatex, PROfab, and Createx brand paints. I most often use Setacolor opaque fabric paints, as I also use the same paints for sun printing. Because they are formulated for fabric, they give a slightly softer hand than regular acrylics.

CHOOSING PAINT COLORS

- Choose any three colors you like, plus black and white. Put these five colors on your palette (or paper plate).
- Use only these five colors, plus any combination of them, for printing from your collagraph plate. This will give you an endless number of colors, shades, and tints to choose from.

In my experience the colors will always look pleasing together if you work this way, and it gives a much better effect than if you work from paint colors straight from the bottles.

8. Mist your fabric from the back. Remember: less is more to start with.
9. Use your hands, fingers, and fingernails to gently rub the raised foam areas and the areas around the shapes, being careful not to shift the fabric. Rub around each raised area or section at a 90° angle to the foam plate to make clean, crisp edges. This will require pushing the fabric ever so slightly around your shapes, sort of like embossing a shape onto paper. If you do not have long fingernails you can use any pointed tool that helps you get as close as possible to the edges of your foam cutouts.

Note: You will probably see some of the paint color coming through your fabric, but it should not appear to be running or bleeding. If it is, you have used too much water. If you gently lift your fabric and see that the print is not dark enough, you can very carefully lay it back down, mist some more, and rub some more. Or, you may find you have not used enough paint and will need to start all over.

10. Lift your fabric away from the plate, let it dry, and heat set it with an iron.

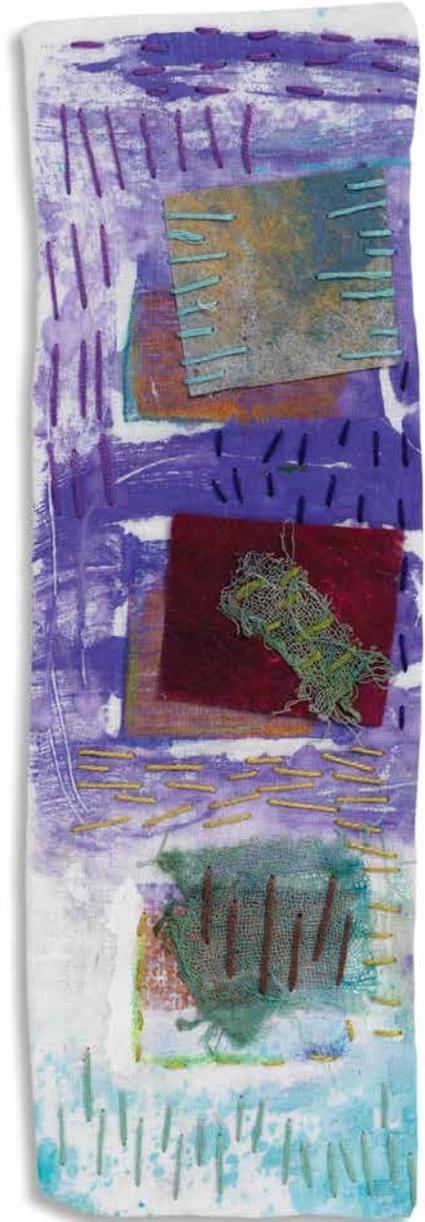
Don't be afraid to use up lots of fabric and paint, and don't begin the process hoping to end the day with each piece being a masterpiece. Think of it as a learning process. A piece that prints too faintly can be painted over. Or if you don't like the whole piece, maybe a small section turned out just as you planned.

Once the paint is dry, I love to add even more color and depth with colored pencils. I also typically do some hand stitching with a variety of



threads. I use a stiff, thick interfacing as my batting, and when I finish stitching, I mount the small quilt on a painted canvas. Once you are comfortable with foam-sheet printing, move on to using other materials on your collagraph plates. Experiment with different textures such as molding paste, sand, leaves, and other organic materials. There is a world of texture to be discovered. ❖

crazyforcolor.blogspot.com



MONOTYPE *versus* MONOPRINT

The terms monoprint and monotype are used somewhat interchangeably but are actually two different printmaking processes. What most of us in the fiber world call a monoprint is actually a monotype. A monotype is essentially a painting created on a surface such as Plexiglas and then transferred to paper (or fabric). It's a singular printmaking method since there are no permanent lines or marks on the plate.

A monoprint plate has etched lines or drawn elements that can be repeated in a series or edition. This underlying image remains the same and is common to each print in a given series. However, you may alter the colors in each image, creating a unique impression. Therefore, a collagraph print could be referred to as a monoprint but not a monotype. Works that combine monotype with other printmaking methods are also called monoprints.