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SCREEN PRINTING

Screen printing is a simple method of making multiples of original art work using a wooden frame with polyester or silk stretched tightly across it. Parts of the fabric are blocked out using various stencil techniques. Ink is then forced through the mesh of the fabric using a squeegee. The ink is deposited in the image of the open areas of the screen on paper, fabric, or any other substance that has been placed under the screen. For each color a separate stencil must be prepared and printed. Hundreds of original prints can be created using this method in a short period of time.

The two methods we will use in this class are the paper stencil method and the drawing fluid and screen filler method.

Freezer paper is excellent for making a paper stencil. Screen filler and drawing fluid are readily available from arts and crafts catalogs or from art supply stores.

STEPS IN SCREEN PRINTING / Paper Stencil Method:

Positive Print:

1. Create a simple sketch and color it in exactly as you would like it to print.
2. Cut a piece of freezer paper the same size as the screen you plan to use. Make sure the paper is larger than the image you want to print.
3. Trace your design in the center of the freezer paper on the plastic side of the paper using a sharpie marker.
4. Use a separate piece of freezer paper for each color of the print.
5. Cut out the areas you want to print using a knife or a scissors, making sure the design is in the center of the paper.
6. Place the stencil, shiny side up, on top of the paper or fabric to be printed. Then place the screen on top of the stencil. Use masking tape to close all areas of the screen where you don't want ink to go through.
7. When it is positioned properly, place ink at the top of the screen and begin printing by pulling the ink toward yourself across the screen with the squeegee. The ink will secure the stencil to the screen. Raise the screen and remove the print, then place another piece of paper to be printed under the screen and continue printing until you are finished.
8. Remove the stencil from the screen and put it aside to dry so that it can be used again.

9. Wash the screen with running water until all the ink is removed from the screen, including the frame. If you do not plan to use that stencil again the tape may be removed from the screen before washing.

Negative Print:

Place the image that you cut out of the paper stencil under the screen on the paper or fabric to be printed. Create a border around the image with masking tape. Continue printing as above.

Screen Filler/Drawing Fluid Method: (Positive Print)

1. Place your drawing under a clean screen. Trace your design lightly onto the screen with a soft pencil. Make sure to leave at least a one inch border between your drawing and the edges of the screen. Raise the screen so it does not touch anything underneath. Using a brush and the blue drawing fluid, trace your pencil drawing on the screen. Make sure the drawing fluid completely blocks out all areas of the screen to be printed.
2. When the drawing fluid is dry, keeping the screen raised so it does not touch anything underneath, pour enough screen filler onto the top of the screen so that it will cover the entire drawing with one swipe of the squeegee. Pull the screen filler over the entire screen with the squeegee, making sure to cover all areas of the drawing fluid.
3. Carefully scrape any excess screen filler from the screen.
4. After the screen is completely dry, wash the screen with cold water. All the drawing fluid will fall out of the screen leaving the areas of the design to be printed open. Use masking tape to close all areas of the screen where ink should not go through.
5. Dry the screen again and proceed with printing as above.

Screen Filler Method: (Negative Print)

1. Place your screen over the drawing that you want to print. Trace the drawing lightly onto the screen with a soft pencil.
2. Raise the screen so it does not touch anything underneath. Using a brush, paint over the areas you do NOT want to print.
3. After the screen filler is dry, use masking tape to block out the edges of the screen to create a border for your print.
4. Proceed with printing as above.

Cleaning the Screen:

When washing your screen after using a paper stencil, either cold or hot water may be used. When using screen filler use only cold water as hot water may deteriorate the filler on the screen. To remove the filler from the screen entirely, spray Greased Lightning on both sides of the screen. Wait 10 minutes and then spray hot water on the screen. Scrub stubborn areas gently with a brush. You may have to repeat this a couple of times or use Speedball Speed Clean to complete the job. Store your screen upright to dry. Make sure nothing pokes the fabric.

The squeegee must also be washed under running water until all ink is removed from the blade.

T-Shirt Printing:

T-shirts may be printed the same way that paper is printed. Make sure you use ink that specifically states it is for fabric printing. A board must be placed inside the shirt before printing so that ink does not go through to the back of the shirt. After the ink is dry and before the first washing, place the shirt in a hot dryer for 30 minutes to heat set the ink. Shirts may then be washed with regular laundry. Avoid very hot water and liquid bleach. If a dryer is not available, iron the shirt with a hot iron for 5 minutes with a clean cloth placed over the printed design.