

Silk Aquatint is a low tech, inexpensive, and safe alternative to etching. The process involves gluing polyester mesh fabric onto a styrene plastic board. Black acrylic is used as the glue and as a means for coloring the background dark. The image is created on the plate by simply painting a white acrylic medium on top of the black background. The texture of the mesh is coated with the white acrylic medium, in different degrees to create a variety of tonal values. Once the acrylic is dry, the plate is wiped and printed in the same manner as an etched plate.

MAKING THE SILK AQUATINT PLATE

Materials Needed

- Styrene plastic board
- Polyester mesh (mesh should be about ½ an inch larger than the Styrene plastic board)
- Black Acrylic paint
- Sponge brush
- Sand paper

Materials needed

- Water and mixing container
- Sharp blade for cutting

Preparation

1. Sand the styrene plastic board lightly to give it a tooth for better adhesion.
2. Clean the styrene plastic board of all dust with a damp lint free rag.
3. Mix black acrylic with water to the consistency of milk.

Adhering the silk mesh to the plate

1. Lay the polyester mesh on top of the styrene plastic board. Place the mesh slightly askew in relation to the styrene plate. Make sure mesh is not parallel to the plate. This will prevent fraying around the edges on the plate. Keep polyester mesh wrinkle and dust free.
2. With a sponge brush, apply black acrylic (mixed with water) on top of the mesh. Start at the center of the plate and paint outwards until the entire surface is black.
3. Let the plate dry completely
4. Trim excess mesh off the sides of the plate with a sharp blade or x-acto blade.

CREATING THE IMAGE ON THE PLATE

Materials needed

Silk Aquatint Plate (follow instructions above for creating)
White acrylic paint
Gloss Medium
Variety of Paint brushes and applicators for image making
Water
Mixing Containers

Preparation

Prepare Mixture for Silk Aquatint Painting Medium

- 1 part white acrylic
- 5 parts acrylic medium

Painting on the Plate

Simply paint prepared Silk Aquatint Paint Medium on the plate (see above). To avoid seeing brush strokes in the print, water down Silk Aquatint Painting Medium. To produce lighter tones and show the white of the paper on the finished print build up the plate by layering the acrylic. For best results, let the paint dry before adding each layer.

INKING & WIPING THE PLATE

Materials needed

- Akua Intaglio water-based inks
- Akua Blending Medium
- Tarlatan
- Plastic ink spreader or cut squares of matte board
- Etching Press

The Silk Aquatint plate is wiped and printed in the same manner as an etched plate. Apply Akua Intaglio water-based ink to the plate using a plastic ink spreader. If the ink is stiff, thin by adding a little Akua Blending Medium. It may be necessary to do a paper wipe for highlights. Print on dampened paper. Clean up plates with liquid dish detergent.

Tips:

For multi-registered plates, try printing monotypes first using Akua Kolor water-based ink. Silk Aquatint plates print very well on top of Akua Kolor. Avoid overprinting one Silk Aquatint plate over the other. The inks will be too thick to print on top of one another.