

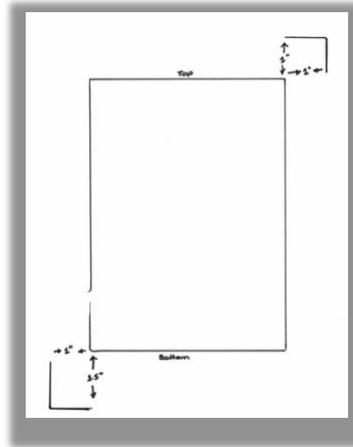


Watercolour monotypes

- Newsprint for registration sheet (usually larger in size than the paper you will cut for printing), printing, and drying
- Plexiglass plate with beveled edges, glass, or a piece of acetate, so long as it is taped down (see NOTE)
- Gum arabic solution (available at art stores) or dishwashing liquid
- Cheesecloth or tarlatan
- Watercolours (set, tubes, inks)
- Brushes, q-tips, any painting tool
- Other water-soluble media you can add to create textures, etc. (crayons, pencil, etc).
- Thinner papers, especially for hand-printing, such as Japanese mulberry paper or even Thai Kozo, and Canson Ingres (NOTE: Thicker textured papers are not recommended unless you have access to a printing press and the image can be transferred under pressure)
- Clear garbage bag, which acts as a damp pack for paper
- Rolling pin, baren, brayer, or spoon for printing

Method

1. Prepare a registration sheet using newsprint. I place my plate right in the middle of the sheet and then just trace around the edges so that I have more or less exact dimensions. If you have worked out if your image will be horizontal or vertical, give 1 inch on the top and both sides of the traced plate on your registration sheet, and 1.5 inches from the bottom of the plate. Make registration guides for the corners of your paper to make it easier to line up the paper.



2. First, you will prepare your image surface, which could be acetate, plexiglass or glass. If filing the edges of your plate is not possible because you need a well-ventilated space, tape the edges instead. The same applies to glass.
3. Preparation is done with gum arabic or dishwashing liquid, both of which act as the releasing agent, so that the paint adheres to the surface and transfers to the damp paper during printing. You are welcome to use the entire surface of the plate for your image but if you prefer just an area, you can tape off the areas you will leave empty (this happens at step 3). OPTIONAL: Sand the surface of the plexiglass to give it some tooth but this must be done in a well-ventilated space wearing a respirator.
4. Wipe the surface with rubbing alcohol to remove any grease or smudges. Wait a couple of minutes until completely dry. NOTE: If you are not planning to use the entire surface of the plate for your image, you can now tape off the excess areas around your image area.

5. Pour a small amount of gum arabic on to the dry surface. I find 1 tablespoon for a 12" x 16" plate to be sufficient. Using the cheesecloth, buff down the surface of the plexiglass so that there is a very thin layer. If using dishwashing liquid, you can use a paper towel to do this. Do not dilute the dishwashing liquid with water. You do not want an excessive amount of the releasing agent on the surface and a little goes a long way.
6. Let the plate dry. I usually leave mine a couple of hours, though you could speed up the process with a fan (however, be mindful of lint or dust in this case). If you plan to use multiple plexiglass plates, simply repeat this process for the preparation.
7. Once your plate is dry, you can start painting your image on. If you have a photograph or a printed image, you can place it under the plexiglass and copy it. Keep in mind that when you print, the image will be reversed.
8. If you are using watercolour pencils or water-soluble crayons as well, use these directly on the wet watercolour. To create interesting effects, you can sprinkle a small amount of salt into the wet watercolour, or use a spray bottle and spray small amounts of alcohol into the paint. Once your image is complete, leave for at least an hour to allow it to completely dry.
9. In the meantime, you can cut your paper. Keeping the dimensions from the registration sheet in mind, remember to give 1 inch from the top and both sides of the image, as well as 1.5 inches from the bottom the image. With watercolour monotypes, depending on the dampness of the paper and the thickness of it, I might get the original image and one ghost. Thus, prepare two identical sheets of paper for one plate.
10. Lay out a clear garbage bag and cut along one edge (lengthwise) to open it. This makes it easier to place your damp paper and remove it during printing.
11. As I use thinner paper for watercolour monotypes, I place the dry sheets in the damp pack and dampen with a paper towel dipped in water. This is so that I handle it as little as possible before printing. This is done at least 10 minutes before I print.
12. For thicker rag paper, soaking is good but when you lift the paper out of the water, hold it at an angle to allow the excess water to drip.
13. For Japanese paper, depending on the thinness of the paper, simply misting it with a spray bottle is effective.
14. When ready to print, blot your printing paper with either a towel or a piece of clean newsprint to remove any excess water. The paper should not glisten or it will be too wet. Also have newsprint sheets ready to place the print in.
15. Line up the edges of your paper with the paper guides so that the image prints exactly where it is supposed to. Press down the paper, then place two sheets of newsprint (or a folded sheet) on top, and transfer image using a rolling pin/brayer/baren/wooden spoon. I also use my hands to press down the paper to make sure the image really transfers.
16. Remove the sheets, then slowly lift the paper off the plate. Place between the newsprint sheets and set aside. If there is enough paint still on the plate, print a ghost (repeat steps 12-14).
17. Place the newsprint sheets with the prints under boards, though I tend to just place books on top. It depends on what you have available.

18. Leave prints to dry for at least 2 days. I find 3 days are suitable, especially since I like to work on top of my monotypes afterwards. Enjoy!