

# Water-Based Monotype

by Susan Rostow, printmaker and  
formulator of  
Akua Water-based Inks

Students will learn basic drawing and painting skills through monotype. They will discover how line and tonal values interplay to produce various effects. While printing multiple transparent color overlays, they will also gain an understanding of color mixing. Students produce a monotype by drawing with ink on a sheet of plastic.

Simple multi-color monotypes can be made following the step-by-step process below to build color in layers. Akua inks can also be applied directly from the bottle to the plate and printed in one pass. Students can use a variety of brushes, sponges or even fingers to apply and modify their drawings — it's safe and easy to clean up.

**Grade Levels 3-8** *Note: instructions and materials based on a class of 25 students. Adjust as needed.*



## Materials

Rostow & Jung™ Akua Intaglio Inks, need two bottles each of the following colors:  
Hansa Yellow (40311-4704)  
Crimson Red (40311-3164)  
Phthalo Blue (40311-5164)

Rostow & Jung™ Akua Intaglio Transparent Base (40309-1000), need one jar

Akua-Kolor Water-based Ink, Jet Black (40311-2044), share two bottles across class

Speedball® Soft Rubber Brayer (40104-1004), need one per color used

Weber® Art brushes, class pack of 144 (05100-7144)

Webriil® Lint-Free Wipes (48901-1100), need one per color used

Printmaking papers, one per student, recommend one of the following selection:  
Magani Pescia (10436-1022)  
Rives BFK (10419-1002)  
Stonehenge (10423-1002)

Clear Styrene Sheets, 8" x 10" (18908-1952) use as monotype plate, one per student

Wooden Inking Plate (42906-1002), one per color

Dexter™ Russell® Flexible Inking Putty Knife (45115-4125), one per color

Blick Etching Press, one of the following:  
Model 906 (45013-000)  
906 II (45033-1010)  
999 II (45031-1001)  
Master Etch II (45028-1001)

If handprinting, use an 8" Polypropylene brayer (40100-1008) or Speedball Baren (42905-1045)

## Preparation and Hints

1. Choose to work spontaneously or work from a sketch. Working spontaneously may offer greater freedom to work in an abstract manner. If working from a sketch, use a thick black water-based marking pen on paper that is slightly larger than the plate. Place the finished sketch underneath the plastic plate for guidance. Trace the outline of the plate for registration.
  2. Before the students begin, set up three separate inking stations, one for Yellow, one for Red and one for Blue. For each inking station, remove about 1 tablespoon of ink from the jar with inking putty knife and spread the ink out on the inking plate with a soft brayer.
  3. Each student will work from a single styrene plate. It's not necessary to clean the plate between rolling up each color, as long as colors are printed in order from light to dark. The ink residue from the previous color will act as a guide for drawing into the next rolled-on color.
  4. If printing by hand, first roll a thin layer of Transparent Base on the surface of the plate. Akua-Kolor with the addition of Transparent Base will release from the plate with the very lightest of pressure. Unmodified Akua-Kolor only transfers well with the pressure of an etching press.
  5. If printing with an etching press, always check for puddles of ink that may blob when going through the press. If puddles are seen, blot gently with tissue paper.
- **Yellow Plate:** Roll plate with Yellow ink. Wipe away areas of Yellow ink. Print on White paper. Where Yellow is removed, the final image will be White, Magenta, Purple or Blue. Yellow areas left on the plate may print Yellow, Orange, Green or Brown.
  - **Red Plate:** Roll plate with Red ink. Wipe away areas of Red ink. The Red plate is printed to the Yellow print. Where Red is removed, areas may print White, Yellow, Green or Blue. Red areas left on the plate may print Orange, Magenta, Purple and Brown shades.
  - **Blue Plate:** Roll plate with Blue ink. Wipe away areas of Blue ink. The Blue plate is printed to the Yellow and Red print. Where Blue is removed, the final print may be White, Orange, Yellow and Magenta. Blue areas left may print Green, Purple, Blue and Brown. Be careful not to go too dark with the Blue. Make sure enough areas are wiped away so that the Blue does not overpower the print. A mixture of equal parts of Akua-Intaglio Transparent Base can be added to the Blue to increase transparency.
  - **Black Plate** (optional) At this point, the monotype may be finished or continued with the use of Black ink. This time instead of rolling up the plate and wiping away the image, Black will be applied with a fine, soft hair watercolor brush. The Black brushstrokes printed over Yellow, Red, and Blue may bring out the vibrancy of the colors and help pull the image together. Pour a small amount of Akua-Kolor Black ink in a watercolor tray and paint Akua-Kolor directly on the plate.

## Process

1. Each color is applied to the plate with a soft brayer and printed on dry paper separately, one on top of another. To register the plates, place the paper on the press bed, hold the plate inky side down over the last printed image. Once in registration, lower it in place. This method allows for perfect registration. Print the monotype with the plate on top of the paper.

## Clean-up:

1. Clean all surfaces with a dry paper towel, then follow up with liquid dish soap and then water. Wash hands with liquid hand soap and then wipe with a DRY paper towel before rinsing with water.

## **National Standards**

### Content Standard #1 —

Understanding and applying media, techniques, and processes

#### **K-4**

- Students use different media, techniques and processes to communicate ideas, experiences and stories

#### **5-8**

- Students intentionally take advantage of the qualities and characteristics of art media, techniques and processes to enhance communication of their experiences and ideas

Content Standard #2 — Using knowledge of structures and functions

#### **K-4**

- Students know the differences among visual characteristics and purposes of art in order to convey ideas

#### **5-8**

- Students generalize about the effects of visual structures and functions and reflect upon these effects in their own work

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