

# Akua Liquid Pigment Monotype Printmaking Instructions

## REMEMBER TO STIR THEN SHAKE THE BOTTLE OF AKUA LIQUID PIGMENT BEFORE EACH USE

Akua Liquid Pigment is professional quality water-based ink specifically formulated for monotype printmaking. It is made of the highest quality, lightfast pigments and binders. No chalk, fillers, dryers or polymers are added. Pigments settle to the bottom of the bottle because there are no suspending agents added. This sign of purity is also what makes Akua Liquid Pigment so uniquely radiant in color.

Some colors contain a stainless-steel mixing ball in the bottle to aid in the mixing process. To ensure pigment dispersion, shake the bottle for at least one minute after hearing the mixing ball rattle.

## The Additive or Direct Monotype Method (Working from a Light Field)

Akua Liquid Pigment is ready to use straight from the bottle. The liquid formula is great for all types of monotype processes. It is wonderfully brushable for additive monotype methods using all types of artist paint brushes and dip pens. Akua Liquid Pigment comes ready to use. Just fill the brush or pen and begin drawing on your plate.

1. Shake the bottle of Akua Liquid Pigment
2. Select colors and arrange palette or fill applicators
3. Apply Akua Liquid Pigment onto the monotype plate
4. Check the plate for puddles of Akua Liquid Pigment that may squeeze out during the printing process
5. If puddles are seen, blot them gently with tissue paper
6. Print on dry paper when using a press or on dampened paper when printing by hand pressure

## The Subtractive or Reductive Monotype Method (Working from a Dark Field)

Another method for creating monotypes, referred to as the subtractive or reductive method, involves rolling the ink onto the surface of the plastic plate. The image is created by drawing into the inky surface and removing ink from the plate. Cotton swabs, rags, sponges, etc. make great tools for removing the ink and creating the image.

## Rolling Up

Roll Akua Liquid Pigment directly onto the surface of the plate. There is no need to roll up on a separate slab and transfer the ink. It is best to roll out a very small amount of ink, wait a few minutes and then add a little more, slowly building up the ink on the plate. If too much ink is added all at once, your brayer will slip, slide and will not be able to roll.

1. Place a towel over the top and shake the bottle of Akua Liquid Pigment
2. Squeeze 3 to 8 drops (depending on the size of the plate) of Akua Liquid Pigment around on the monotype plate
3. Add about 1 drop of Retarder for every three or four drops Akua Liquid Pigment. This will keep the ink from sticking to the paper
4. Spread the ink out evenly over the surface of the monotype plate using a soft brayer. Wait.
5. Add 3-8 more drops of Akua Liquid Pigment (no additional Retarder is needed) to the inked plate and roll out again
6. Hold the plate up to the light. If the ink on your plate looks too transparent, repeat step 5. until you achieve the desired density of color. **Note:** If your roller is picking up the color rather than putting it down, there is too much ink on the surface of the plate. Remove some of the ink, or wait a few minutes for it to air dry
7. Draw into the inked surface of the monotype plate by removing the Akua Liquid Pigment using cotton swabs, tissue paper, rags, sponges, etc.
8. Print on dry paper

## Beading

Sometimes beading occurs due to a change in chemistry. If beading occurs when rolling up, add a drop of any liquid dish detergent to the ink. This should stop the beading.

When painting with a brush, lightly coat your paint brush with the liquid dish detergent then paint over the beaded area.

## Printing on Dry or Damp Paper

Akua Liquid Pigment prints beautifully on dry paper as long as the ink remains wet on the plate and printing is done on a press. We recommend dampening the paper when printing by hand or when drypoint or collograph plates are used.

To dampen papers that have already been printed, lightly spray the back of the paper and wrap in a plastic bag.

To dry Akua Liquid Pigment on the plate, use a hair dryer or leave out in the sun. Dried Akua Liquid Pigment will release easily onto dampened paper during the printing process.

### **Clean Up**

Most of the time cleaning plates and counter tops with a damp rag is all that is required. A small amount of dish soap mixed with water in a spray bottle can also be used. A small brush is often helpful for cleaning brayers. Some intense colors may stain plastic surfaces over time. Use a mild dish detergent or Bon Ami cleanser for cleaning stains from plastic plates and counter tops. Bon Ami will not scratch plastic surfaces and does not contain chlorine bleach.

## **AKUA LIQUID PIGMENT MODIFIERS**

Apply Akua Liquid Pigment to the plate away from drafts, sunny windows, heaters and air conditioners.

### **Retarder**

Adding Retarder to Akua Liquid Pigment slows the drying rate, giving you additional hours to work on reductive monotype plates. Retarder also helps release Akua Liquid Pigment from the plate to dry paper during the printing process.

How much Retarder should be added? It is important to determine the correct amount of Retarder to use for your particular technical style as well as the humidity conditions in your shop. The amount of Retarder needed may vary from printmaker to printmaker, shop to shop and season to season. You will need to determine the amount by trial and error.

Guidelines for adding Retarder

- If you roll up a plate with Akua Liquid Pigment for the reductive monotype method and it feels too stiff to lift easily with a cotton swab, more Retarder should be added.
- If Akua Liquid Pigment is not releasing as well as you wish from the plate on to dry paper during the printing process, more Retarder should be added.

**Note:** Too much Retarder may cause the ink to bead on the plate. Also, if dark colors on the finished print are drying hazy, use less Retarder.

### **Blending Medium**

Akua Liquid Pigment Blending Medium also slows the drying rate of Akua Liquid Pigment. It is less tacky than the Retarder, giving you a more fluid medium for blending color and for creating washes. Blending Medium actually encourages the pigment to separate out, giving a watercolor wash look.

To use: Dip a clean brush into the Blending Medium and apply next to the color on the plate, then simply blend.

Brush Blending Medium onto a plate, then apply a small amount of color through the medium with a brush. Wait a minute or two before printing.

### **Tack Thickener**

This unique modifier adds more tack and thickens Akua Liquid Pigment instantly. It is used in relief printmaking processes and for rolling up heavier applications of Akua Liquid Pigment onto monotype plates, linoleum and wood blocks. Color will become deeper and more intense.

To use: Place desired amount of Akua Liquid Pigment onto a glass surface. Add up to 50% Tack Thickener and mix with a palette knife until stiff.

It is best to use printmaking papers that are absorbent. Magnani Pescia, Fabriano, Tiepolo, Fabriano Rosasapina and a wide variety of Asian papers are excellent choices.

**Note:** Akua Liquid Pigment with Tack Thickener may take a long time to dry when printed on coated or bond papers. It also can look grainy. Another way to thicken Akua Liquid Pigment is to allow it to air dry (see directions under "Extender").

### **Extender**

Akua Liquid Pigment will stiffen naturally to the same consistency as tube watercolors when left on an uncovered tray over a period of time. Referred to as "air thickening," this procedure will thicken Akua Liquid Pigment without adding tack. This process may be desirable for heavier ink applications for additive or reductive monotype processes, linoleum or wood blocks.

To air-thicken Akua Liquid Pigment, add colors to a watercolor tray or jar and let sit. This may take a few hours, days or weeks depending upon the amount left out in the tray or jar. Akua Liquid Pigment will stiffen evenly without skinning over. When the desired consistency is reached, cover with a lid and save.

Extender may be added directly to colors that have become too thick, bringing them back close to their original consistency.

Extender also makes the ink more transparent. Try printing, then overprinting with ink with Extender so ink printed underneath can show through.

**Note:** Air-thickened Akua Liquid Pigment will dry more quickly on the plate. Retarder may be added to delay the ink from drying too quickly. Dampening the printing paper may also be necessary for printing with these drier inks.

### **Release Agent**

Roll onto the plate before adding ink to get more ink to release onto the paper.

After the print is made there will be some ink remaining on the plate, which is called the ghost plate. The ghost plate can be printed as a lighter version of the same image or used to develop a new monotype image. Roll a coat of Release Agent onto the ghost plate and print.

### **TROUBLE SHOOTING**

Ink is not releasing from plate to dry paper

- Apply more pressure
- Try different papers
- Add Retarder

Ink rolled onto the plate feels too stiff

- Add Retarder to the ink

Colors on finished prints dry hazy

- Add less Retarder or Extender

Color beads-up on plate

- Degrease plate with vinegar and baking soda
- Add less Retarder or Extender
- Add a drop of liquid dish detergent to ink

▪ Apply thin coat of liquid dish detergent to brush  
Rubber Brayer is sliding when inking up

- Add less ink to the plate
- Add Tack Thickener
- Air thicken
- Select color with a more intense transparency rating
- Use a foam brayer instead of rubber

Ink is too thin for brushing

- Air Thicken

The ink puddles at the start of Needle Applicator lines

- When the needle is first placed on the plate, a small bead of ink may run off the tip. Before placing the tip on the plate, wipe the bead of ink off by running the tip over a stiff piece of paper

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