

## **The Aquatint Screen**

If you intend on working with drawings and photopolymer printmaking films like ImagOn, then you need an Aquatint Screen to provide a dot pattern. First the ImagOn plate is exposed to the Aquatint Screen to provide an overall rich black 'aquatint-like' base, in preparation for a second exposure to a drawing or continuous tone positive. This Aquatint Screen perfectly simulates the random dot of a fine aquatint. After these two exposures the ImagOn plate is developed, dried, and printed with traditional inks in the intaglio manner.

### **Sizes and Prices**

**10" x 12", 250mm x 300mm, – USD\$37.00**  
Shipped in a cardboard envelope.

**20" x 24", 510mm x 610mm – USD\$100.00**  
Shipped in a 2" PVC tube with endcaps.

**35" x 42", 915mm x 1070mm – USD\$162.00**  
Shipped in a 2" PVC tube with endcaps.

Please email [elizabeth@elizabethdove.com](mailto:elizabeth@elizabethdove.com) for shipping and payment options.

### **Background**

Making intaglio prints from polymer plates is a recent and exciting contribution to traditional etching processes. Photographs and hand drawn imagery can be transformed into an intaglio print in about 25 minutes without the use of toxic materials or acids. Although this represents a major revolution from conventional etching processes, many of the traditional rules for platemaking are still relevant when working with polymer films - for instance the need for a dot pattern or texture in the image areas of the etching plate. This texture or dot pattern on the polymer plate determines the quality of the finished print, in much the same way that an etched aquatint dot, or a soft-ground texture, determines the quality of a conventionally etched plate.

How do you establish the dot pattern on a polymer plate, specifically when working with a photopolymer printmaking film like ImagOn? A drawing or photograph can be turned into an etching by using an Aquatint Screen. The Aquatint Screen is used during the platemaking stage to provide the necessary dot pattern in conjunction with the photographic or hand drawn positive.

The Aquatint Screen is used for direct contact exposures to ImagOn photopolymer film. Each Aquatint Screen has an opaque dot structure. Exposing this Aquatint Screen to an ImagOn plate will create an overall rich black 'aquatint-like' base, in preparation for a second exposure to a drawing or photographic positive. First the ImagOn plate is exposed to the Aquatint Screen to provide a random dot pattern, then a second time to the image. After these two exposures the ImagOn plate is developed, dried, and printed with traditional inks in the intaglio manner. The process from exposure to print takes about 25 minutes

## **Using the Aquatint Screen with Drawings**

The intaglio mark making possibilities when working with the Aquatint Screen are numerous, ranging from subtle ink and tusche type washes to delicate hand drawn lines to bold expressive crayon drawings. All drawings and paintings must be on transparent or translucent material. All drawing or painting materials must be opaque to high intensity UV light.

This non-etched process presents a direct and painterly approach to creating intaglio prints. Graphite, gouache, acrylic, water-colour, water-colour pencils, lithographic-type wax pencils and crayons and tusche all work beautifully as drawing materials onto transparent acetate or frosted Mylar.

## **Using The Aquatint Screen with Photographs**

Photographs can be transformed into intaglio prints when the Aquatint Screen is used as the base to create the dot pattern. Photographs can be reproduced from photocopies, digital, or darkroom positives. All photographic material must be positive, not negative. All photographic material must be on a transparent or translucent base and the image areas must be opaque to high intensity UV light.

If you are able to control the dot pattern either digitally or in the darkroom, you can create a halftone with an 'open dot' in the blackest areas. If this 'open dot' is about 60-70%, then you will not have to use the Aquatint Screen as this halftone dot is sufficient to create the necessary dot pattern for your intaglio print.

## **Care of the Aquatint Screen**

The Aquatint Screen is produced digitally using an imagesetter and a laser onto a sturdy conventional silver film. The non-emulsion side of the screen is durable and can withstand vigorous cleaning. The emulsion(dot) side of the screen is more delicate and should be cleaned only with 70% isopropyl (rubbing) alcohol to remove grease or soaked in ImagOn sodium carbonate developer to remove dried bits of photopolymer. The screen should be stored flat. Scratches and heavy creases should be avoided. The Aquatint Screen includes Care and Use Instructions, and an excerpt from Non-toxic Intaglio Printmaking by Keith Howard on the recommended use of the screen.

## **Details of the Aquatint Screen**

This Aquatint Screen's distinctive dot pattern is derived from the original non-glare Asahi glass, produced in Japan until the devastating Kobe earthquake in 1995. Due to domestic restrictions on the use of hydrofluoric acid in Japan, non-glare glass was made using unique patterns that were rolled into the hot plate glass during manufacture to impart the non-glare texture. Coincidentally, this pattern was ideal for producing dot patterns in the darkroom perfectly suited to photo-intaglio work. After the Kobe earthquake, the Asahi glass factory was relocated to Indonesia and this manufacturing process was eliminated.

**The Aquatint Screen's dot pattern has been captured digitally from existing pre-1995 non-glare Asahi glass so that this unique dot structure can continue to support photo-intaglio printmaking.**