

Layered Screen Printing

by Lyric Montgomery Kinard

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Host Susan Brubaker Knapp and quilt artist Lyric Kinard

Materials

- Fabric (I prefer hand-dyed cloth; the fabric must be dyed not printed.)
- Dishwasher gel with bleach (I used Cascade® Dishwasher Gel with Clorox®.)
- Bleach stop or antichlor
- Thermofax® screens
- Transparent textile paint base extender
- Transparent white textile paint (All of the paint I used is PROfab Textile Paint from PRO™ Chemical & Dye.)
- Black textile paint
- Opaque white textile paint
- Paintbrush
- Foil glue adhesive
- Foil

Flying things have always fascinated me and the myriad shapes of wings attached to birds or insects or even bats interest and amuse me enough that I'll put them on just about any image that catches my fancy. Screen printing is my favorite surface design technique, and the opportunity to indulge my whims when it comes to wings will catch me every time. The secret to creating a cohesive image with images of objects that don't normally fly is to integrate everything. If everything has at least one thing in common—whether it's a color palette or a direction of line—then the final image will work.

INSTRUCTIONS

I usually begin with a focal point image of an object then rummage through my many Thermofax screens of various wings to find the perfect shape and size to match. Next comes a lovely piece of hand-dyed fabric and a hunt for related textural images that will work as a background. I think textiles are such a lovely medium for art because they offer

the viewers layers to discover as they come closer and spend more time with the work. Adding very subtle layers of texture to these pieces often delights the viewer as they get up close to the art. Background images often relate in conceptually as well as visually to the main focal point image. A violin might have music written in the background, a clock might have barely legible poetry about time. The cloth is printed and sometimes discharged with this imagery in a very subtle color palette so that it doesn't compete with the main image.

1. Prepare a work space for printing. I suggest covering the surface with plastic sheeting to protect it.
2. Place the fabric on the work surface with a Thermofax screen of textural imagery for the background on top. I used a screen of handwritten text in the sample shown.
3. Using the dishwasher gel with bleach like 'paint,' drag it across the screen slightly imperfectly—you're going for an overall textured look for the background rather than a precise image. This bleach gel will

discharge dye from the fabric. Clean the Thermofax screen promptly with the antichlor. Let the fabric dry completely—and, going forward, continue to do so between each layer of printing.

Tip: *To make the background more complex, screen print more imagery with the transparent paint thinned with extender.*

4. Mix the opaque paint with extender to thin it out a bit.
5. Place the main image on the dried, discharged fabric.

Tip: *I rarely center my focal point on a background, preferring instead to place it off-center to create interest. Yes, sometimes this does not leave room for the wings to show on both sides but that really isn't a problem. The viewer will always fill in what is missing with their imagination.*

6. Screen print the main image (the pocket watch in this sample) with opaque white paint. Use a paintbrush to add more paint to fill in the entire inner design. This provides a crisp and solid area for the final print, which will go on top in a later step.
7. Position other images (wings in this sample) and screen print using foil adhesive. Try as best you can to place the adhesive only where you want foil to be. When dry, adhere the foil with a hot, dry iron according to the manufacturer's directions. Let the foil cool completely and peel the excess from the fabric.

8. Once the layers are dry, carefully position the main image screen back on top of the opaque white print and screen a layer of black paint.
9. Finish the piece as desired. I mounted my print on stretched canvas.

TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL SCREEN PRINTING

- Never let paint or adhesive dry on a Thermofax screen. That will ruin it! Have handy a pan of water big enough for the entire screen to fit and dunk it immediately after you are done printing. When using glue or other media, check the manufacturer's directions for proper cleaning, in case water will not do the trick.
- To avoid smudges when layering with different screens, be sure to allow the paint (or other media) to dry thoroughly before proceeding with additional layers.

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