HOW TO SCREEN PRINT

The 'screen' in screen print was traditionally made from silk and stretched over a wooden frame; so, it is often referred to as 'Silk Screen Printing'. Modern screens are usually made of synthetic fibers and stretched across aluminium – they are far more lightweight and durable. The method explained here is a traditional form of screen-printing using cutout stencils, therefore, no expensive materials or studio equipment is necessary.

YOU WILL NEED:

- Screen
- Screen printing inks, or acrylic paint mixed with acrylic printing medium
- Squeegee
- Palette knife
- Gummed tape and bowl of water
- Thin paper, e.g. newsprint, grease-proof, tracing
- Scrap paper
- Printing paper, or other printing surface (fabric, board, etc)
- Cup/pot to mix paint
- Masking tape
- Degreaser

METHOD:

- Prepare the print area of your screen. Wet the gummed tape in the water and stick it to the

front of your screen, making a straight border. Leave this to dry before using

- Draw and cut out your stencil, using thin paper

- Mix the colour ink you require in a cup or pot. Use approximately 2/3 acrylic paint to1/3 printing medium. Test the ink on a scrap of paper and add either paint or medium until you have your desired consistency and transparency

- Place you printing paper on a flat surface and position your stencil over it. Place the screen over the stencil (flattest side down) and position correctly. Use masking tape to mark where the outer edges of both the screen and the paper underneath are – these will guide you so that your screen and paper is always positioned correctly

- Pour your ink along the bottom of the screen

- Lift and 'flood' the screen with ink:
    - Hold the screen up at the end closest to you
    - Use your other hand to hold the squeegee and drag an even coating of ink to the other end of the screen
    - Push away from yourself at a 45° angle
    - The 'sharpest' point of the squeegee should be in contact with the screen mesh

- Lower the screen back on to the paper – checking position against the masking tape guides

- Use both hands to pull the squeegee towards yourself, again at a 45° angle, pushing ink through the mesh and on to your print paper

- Carefully place the squeegee to one side (on a piece of scrap paper)

- Lift the frame to remove your print

- Repeat on fresh pieces of paper. Use the masking tape guides to position. The stencil will now remain in place on the screen

- When you have your desired quantity of prints, use a palette knife to scoop up any unused ink and seal in a pot

- Peel off the stencil and gummed tape and rinse the screen and the squeegee in running water

- Spray the screen lightly on both sides with degreaser, leave for 30seconds to a minute, rinse with water (careful not to touch the screen again)

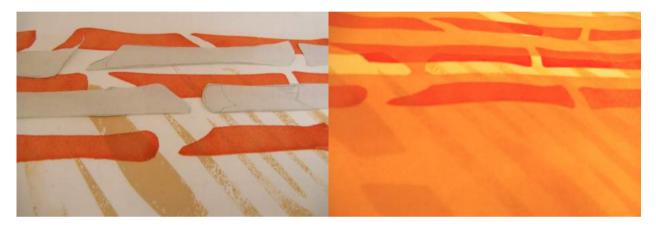- Store the screen upright, somewhere clean and safe

TIPS AND TRICKS:
- Sprinkle talcum powder or fine chalk over the print paper, lower the screen and print as usual. The talc/chalk blocks the ink from contacting the paper and leaves an interesting pattern

- Before flooding the screen, block areas of mesh with crayon, draw directly on to the mesh. Lift the frame slightly to avoid crayon getting on to your print paper. Remember, the areas of crayon will remain the same colour as you paper, e.g. white

- Create multiple layers of colour with a 'registration sheet':

- o Print one colour stencil first and allow to dry
- o Print your second colour on to a piece of transparent paper/plastic
- o Place the first (now dry) print under the transparency to match up where you want the second colour to be. It is a good idea to tape this piece in place so that it doesn't move
- o Remove the transparency
- o Position the frame, using your masking tape guides and print as usual