

## Collagraph

Collagraph printing is a relatively recent and highly versatile printmaking technique that involves making a printmaking plate from readily available non-toxic materials. Plates can be inked and printed using the relief method or using the intaglio method or inking up combining both of these, or finally, the plate could be used to create blind embossed/debossed images where no ink is used at all.

It is difficult to ascertain when collagraph exactly began, but possibly in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, French sculptor Pierre Roche made prints from molded plaster engravings.



Space Tensions *Glen Earl Alps*

Collage became an important landmark in the history of Cubism. It is still unknown who invented it: Braque or Picasso, however, this could have anticipated what was perhaps an inevitable development in printmaking...according to Suzie Mackenzie in her wonderful book "Making Collagraph Prints".

She further writes how innovations in adhesives, fillers and acrylics had encouraged further experimentation by the time artist Glen Earl Alps was credited with first coining the term collagraph in 1950s America.

### **Equipment/Materials needed:**

Etching Press  
Newsprint  
Tissue Paper  
A3 Cartridge paper (preferably Vanguard)  
A4 Cartridge paper (preferably Vanguard)  
A4 Mountboard  
Various Tapes  
PVA Glue  
Varnish/Shellac  
Oil based inks - relief printing  
Oil paint or etching ink - intaglio printing  
Cotton rich paper - intaglio printing

Craft Knife  
Scalpel  
Safety Ruler  
Circle Cutter  
Pencil  
Cutting Mat  
Roller - relief printing  
Greyboard 9cm squares - intaglio printing  
Tissue 10cm squares - intaglio printing  
Blotting towels - intaglio printing  
Water tank to soak paper - intaglio printing

## The process:

### Relief Printing Method:

1. Use mount board card as the base for the collagraph plate. Use a variety of tapes to create an abstract or a more figurative image. The tapes can be layered up and the card can be cut down into, removed or scored.
2. To firmly stick down the tapes on the collagraph plate pass it through the etching press.
3. The plate can be inked up using a roller to print or at this point, a stencil, which needs to be the same size as the plate, can be cut and used in conjunction with the inky collagraph.
4. Place tissue paper on top of the press bed to protect the registration plate.
5. Put the inked up collagraph plate with stencil (or without) FACE UP onto the press bed.
6. Carefully place a larger piece of paper on to the collagraph plate/stencil using the registration plate.
7. Place newsprint on top of the collagraph plate/stencil/paper to protect the blankets.
8. Roll the blankets on top of the press bed.
9. Wind the press over the plate/stencil/papers.
10. Roll back the blankets and check out the print.
11. Leave the print to dry on the drying rack.

### Intaglio Method:

1. Use mount board to make the base of the collagraph and again the card can be cut down into, removed or scored. Tapes can be used again to create an abstract or a more figurative image, but also thin fabrics, thin textured cards, artists acrylic gel, paints, mediums, tile adhesive, carborundum paste, crushed eggshells, coffee grounds, dried flowers, leaves, grasses and feathers, however, these last more organic items will need sticking down with PVA and coated with several coats of varnish to seal all the plate's items.
2. Once the varnish has dried the plate can be inked up.
3. Work on a sheet of newsprint to protect the surface you are working on.
4. Using the grey board 'biscuits' take up some oil paint about 3-4 cm in length.
5. Work the ink into the grooves and textures on the surface pushing the ink in all different directions.
6. Use a clean greyboard 'biscuit' to carefully scrape the excess of ink off the plate until the image can be seen.
7. Use a tissue square to polish up the smooth flat areas and also to clean up any more excess ink.
8. Place tissue paper on top of the press bed to protect the registration plate.
9. Put the inked up collagraph plate **FACE UP** onto the press bed.

10. Carefully place a larger piece of damp paper on to the collagraph plate using the registration plate.
11. Place newsprint on top of the collagraph plate/paper to protect the blankets.
12. Roll the blankets on top of the press bed.
13. Wind the press over the plate/papers.
14. Roll back the blankets and check out the print.
15. Leave the print to dry on the drying rack.

### **Cleaning up:**

Relief printing:

Wear disposable gloves and an apron

1. Using your palette knife scrape up any ink off the table into a dirty rag and place in the metal soiled rags bin.
2. Use vegetable oil and a semi-dirty rag to clean off any excess ink from the table and your plate/s. Place this dirty rag into the soiled rags bin.
3. Use a clean rag and soap solution to wipe any oily residue from the table or your plates.
4. Roll your dirty roller onto some newspaper to remove the majority of ink. Use vegetable oil and soap solution to clean any ink off the roller and handle.

Intaglio printing:

1. Throw away the inky newsprint sheet, used greyboard 'biscuits' and used tissue squares.
2. Use a clean rag and soap solution to wipe any oily residue from the table or your collagraph plate.
3. Leave to dry on the drying rack to be used another time or keep as a piece of art work!

### **Finishing:**

Your prints will take at least 24 hours to dry thoroughly, longer if on non-absorbent paper. Store dry prints wrapped in tissue paper.

### **Further Looking/Reading:**

Check out contemporary artists:

Mari French

<https://marifrenchblog.com/tag/collagraph/>

Akiko Taniguchi

<https://www.davidsongalleries.com/artists/contemporary/akiko-taniguchi/>

Suzie Mackenzie

eBook Making Collagraph Prints

<https://www.mackenziefineart.co.uk/>

<https://www.jacksonsart.com/blog/2014/04/21/collograph-print-making-suzie-mackenzie/>

**Useful Resources:**

For inks, rollers, etching presses, etc

<https://hawthornprintmaker.com/>

<https://intaglioprintmaker.com/>

For papers

<https://www.jacksonsart.com/>

For tapes etc

<https://www.screwfix.com/>

**Suggested Courses for Further Development:**

Gelli Printing, Monoprinting, Introduction to Printmaking and Explore Printmaking courses at Leeds Print Workshop.