

Thermofax Screens

Choosing Print Media

Thermal screens can be used with a wide variety of media but whichever medium you decide to use, it should have a mayonnaise-like consistency - soft enough to pass easily through the screen mesh but thick enough to prevent running or bleeding.

It should also be washable with water (ie no solvents).

Many different people are now using thermal screens with different types of media: cake decorators, glass artists, ceramicists, card makers.

We do not pretend to be expert in all these areas of craft so we can't give advice about the media that should be used for different surfaces. Our detailed advice below only relates to working on textiles or papers. For other surfaces, please bear these things in mind:

Do not use media that has any abrasive content

Do not use media that contain solvents

Do not use media that requires washing with solvents

The following advice applies to textile and paper surfaces only.

Suitable media for textiles can be grouped into three main categories:

- Textile inks/fabric paints - suitable for most surfaces and usually supplied ready to use so very convenient
N.B. textile screen ink is another name for fabric paints that are made for printing
- Thickened fibre-reactive dyes - MX type, suitable for natural fabrics except wool. Some pre-preparation is required and fabric also needs to be soda-soaked before printing and batched and rinsed after printing as for other types of dyeing.
- Special effect media eg. decolourant (colour removal), PVA/fabric size (metal leaf), Matte Medium (paper lamination) – at the moment our new mesh has not been tested with Fibre Etch (Devore) and so we can not currently recommend use

Textile Screen Inks and Fabric Paints:

- Water based textile screen inks, such as those available from Thermofax Screens, are very convenient and require no preparation as they are used straight from the pot. They are suitable for use on most fabrics, man-made and natural
Thermofax Screens textile screen inks can also be used to print on paper – avoid very shiny paper as the print may smear
- Many fabric paints are also suitable provided they are the correct consistency to print – see introduction
- Acrylic paints are formulated to dry very quickly and, if left to dry in the mesh, will permanently block the screen so use with caution. Adding textile medium (also known as extender base) will help, but will also make the paint more transparent
Wash the screens frequently to avoid damage
- Thermofax Screens textile screen inks can be mixed to create a whole rainbow of colours. Be cautious when mixing inks or paints from different brands – some do not 'go' together and will curdle. Always test first!

- Thermofax Screens textile screen inks are highly pigmented so the colours are strong and bright. Lighter or more transparent colours can be achieved by adding Transparent Extender Base
- Pearlescent inks are fairly opaque – this is because the mica that creates the sparkle increases the opacity. They can be mixed with transparent extender base to create semi-sheer colours. Avoid metallic paints with glitter or flakes as they will damage the mesh
- Textile screen inks and fabric paints may stiffen the fabric, particularly if they are thickly applied or if there are several layers of printing. The finished result will vary from brand to brand. The transparent inks from Thermofax Screens have been specially chosen because they have a minimal effect on the hand of the fabric

Thickened Fibre-reactive Procion MX Dyes:

- Procion MX Dyes can only be used on natural fabrics eg cotton, linen, viscose, rayon. Whilst not designed for silk, you can also use them on silk though they are not as effective as acid dyes
- Wash / scour fabrics before dyeing or buy fabric PFD (prepared for dyeing)
- Procion MX dyes need to be thickened and fixed with soda ash – see separate download **Printing with Procion MX dyes**
- Procion MX dyes are fixed by Soda Ash and the best way to deal with this is to soda-soak and dry the fabric prior

Special effect media:

- Decolourant (for colour removal):
Jacquard Decolourant is a ready-to-use paste suitable for printing onto cotton, silk, linen and viscose. Generally it works well on fabrics dyed with procion MX dyes. If using on commercially printed fabrics, do a test first
You can also make a discharge paste by mixing formosol with manutex print paste. Store formosol paste in a cool place or fridge.
Decolourants are activated by steam ironing.
Wash fabric after discharging. The fabric is then ready to use or you add more colour by printing or overdyeing.
- PVA glue or Fabric Size (for metal leaf application) and Matte Medium (for paper lamination):
Wash screens frequently if using glue, size or matte medium to prevent the media drying in the mesh.
If using glue or size for metal leaf lamination, work in small sections and allow to dry until 'tacky' before applying the metal leaf.
Matte medium can be printed through a thermal screen for paper lamination processes.