

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.

**All media should also be washable with water (i.e. no solvents).**

Many 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 paper. 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 screen 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 e.g. decolourant (colour removal), PVA/fabric size (metal leaf), matte medium (paper lamination) –
- Our new mesh has not been tested with Fibre Etch (Devore) and so we cannot currently recommend its use

**Textile screen inks and fabric paints:**

- Water based textile screen inks, such as those available from screens4printing, 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.
- screens4printing 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 – 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.**
- screens4printing 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!

- screens4printing 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.
- Metallic and pearlescent inks are semi-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 screens4printing 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 e.g. 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).
- Dyes may be thickened with Manutex (a seaweed-based thickener) available from your dye supplier.
- Procion MX dyes must be fixed with soda ash and the best way to deal with this is to soda-soak and dry the fabric prior to printing.

### **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 Formosul with Manutex print paste. Store Formosul 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 could 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.

### **screens4printing.com – visit the website to:**

- Buy thermal screens from our extensive design library
- Order custom screens made from your own designs
- Buy water-based textile screen inks and lightweight squeegees