

MESSING WITH MONOPRINTING

The Basics of Monoprinting

Monoprinting is one of the oldest forms of printmaking. Despite its simplicity, monoprints can be complex and beautiful works of art. One of our featured artists, Polly Apfelbaum creates large and colorful monoprints with basic techniques. Monoprinting can be done in your home at almost no cost with simple, basic equipment.

What is Monoprinting?

Normally, printmaking is thought of as a work of art that can be recreated multiple times. However, monoprints can only be created once. For each drawing or painting you make, you can only make one print. To make a monoprint, you need three things: A printing plate, paint, and paper.



Polly Apfelbaum (b. 1955), Love Park IX, 2006, woodblock monoprint.

Printing Plate: A printing plate can be any surface, as long as it is smooth. Pictured here is a plastic monoprinting plate, but you can use many things. Household items that make great printing plates:

- Styrofoam or paper plates
- Tinfoil
- Parchment paper
- Wax Paper
- Nonstick baking sheets
- Plastic tablecloths
- Plastic shower curtains
- Glass or windows
- Mirrors
- Grocery bags



Paint: You have a few options for paint with your monoprints. At the Museum we prefer Crayola Washable paint or Tempera paint. However, you can use Acrylic, gouache, or even wall paint. Watercolor paint is not recommended as it does not have great results- but it can be fun to experiment. And of course, you need something to paint with.

Paper: You can use almost any paper for monoprinting. Printer paper or drawing paper is a great option, but in a pinch you can use newspaper, wrapping paper, or any other kind of paper you can find at home.

SIMPLE MONOPRINTING: STEP BY STEP

For help, you can watch a tutorial here: <https://youtu.be/xOMWjWLAypQ>

1. Brainstorm your idea. Think about what you want to create and what colors you want to use. You can always use a photo for inspiration. If you're using a transparent printing plate, you can place an image underneath (like our example) to trace shapes more easily.
2. Set down your printmaking plate. Make sure it's flat on the table. Any bumps or wrinkles will show up in your final print. Make sure you're painting on a surface you can wash for easy clean up.
3. Paint directly on your printmaking plate. Make sure your paint doesn't dry out—you may always make another monoprint, but a dry paint can't be used. If you have a spray bottle, you can gently mist to keep your paint damp.
4. When you are done painting, press your paper on top of your printing plate and rub it gently. Peel off your paper and *voilà*, you have created your print! If there are places you want to touch up, feel free to add any final touches.
5. Allow time to dry. You may create as many monoprints as you would like!



Example Monoprints

Cleanup Tips: Your paint will wash off easily in warm water with a sponge. Generally, using a monoprinting plate you can throw away afterward is easiest (like tinfoil or a paper plate). Mixing a little soap into your paints also helps manage messiness and keep paints wet longer.