

# ART FOR ALL

**A DIY MANUAL FOR A  
SUSTAINABLE ART PRACTICE**

## Introduction

“Art for All” began in April of 2019, as a DIY bulletin board in the printmaking studios of Florida State University. Concerned about the feasibility of maintaining a print practice after graduating from art school, I began posting images and printed instructions on building your own relief printing presses and setting up a home screen print studio. This began to branch out into the larger issue of creating a sustainable art engagement in and around working a full-time job, raising a family, or whatever other directions life can take after graduation.

I almost titled this “Art for the Rest of Us”, the “rest of us” being, as a friend put it, artists \* “who aren’t on their way to tenure, cashing in checks from their gallerists, or sitting on piles of family money.” If my original goal was to try and rescue art from academia (it still is), the larger goal is to open up cultural participation to those who are not well financed by some faculty development department or an ‘art world’ ~~money laundering machine~~ blue chip gallery. This is for those of us who don’t spend months at artist residencies because there is no way to take that much time off work. We don’t have spacious studios because we cannot afford additional rent and utilities payments. We are resourceful because we have to be. We form connections and networks with other artists who are working through the same challenges, we share information and create opportunities for ourselves and for each other.

Art for All is going to be a continual work in progress, updated as new information, ideas and opportunities present themselves. At this iteration, it is still leaning toward setting up a home printmaking studio and directed at artists with a solid base of technical skill - in other words there are no how to’s for the beginner who has never pulled a print. Instead, I am going to include a list of community print shops that offer workshops.

There is so much more to include; whether or not to go to graduate school: art professions that can survive an economic downturn like, say, a global pandemic (county, state, and federally funded museums and libraries are currently doing better than privately funded institutions): and the many art practices outside of printmaking that you can do now, where you are, with what you have.

I hope you find this zine useful. If there is anything else you’d like to see covered, please DM me at @porch\_possum\_press.

Amy Fleming

*Adjunct Professor in Printmaking*

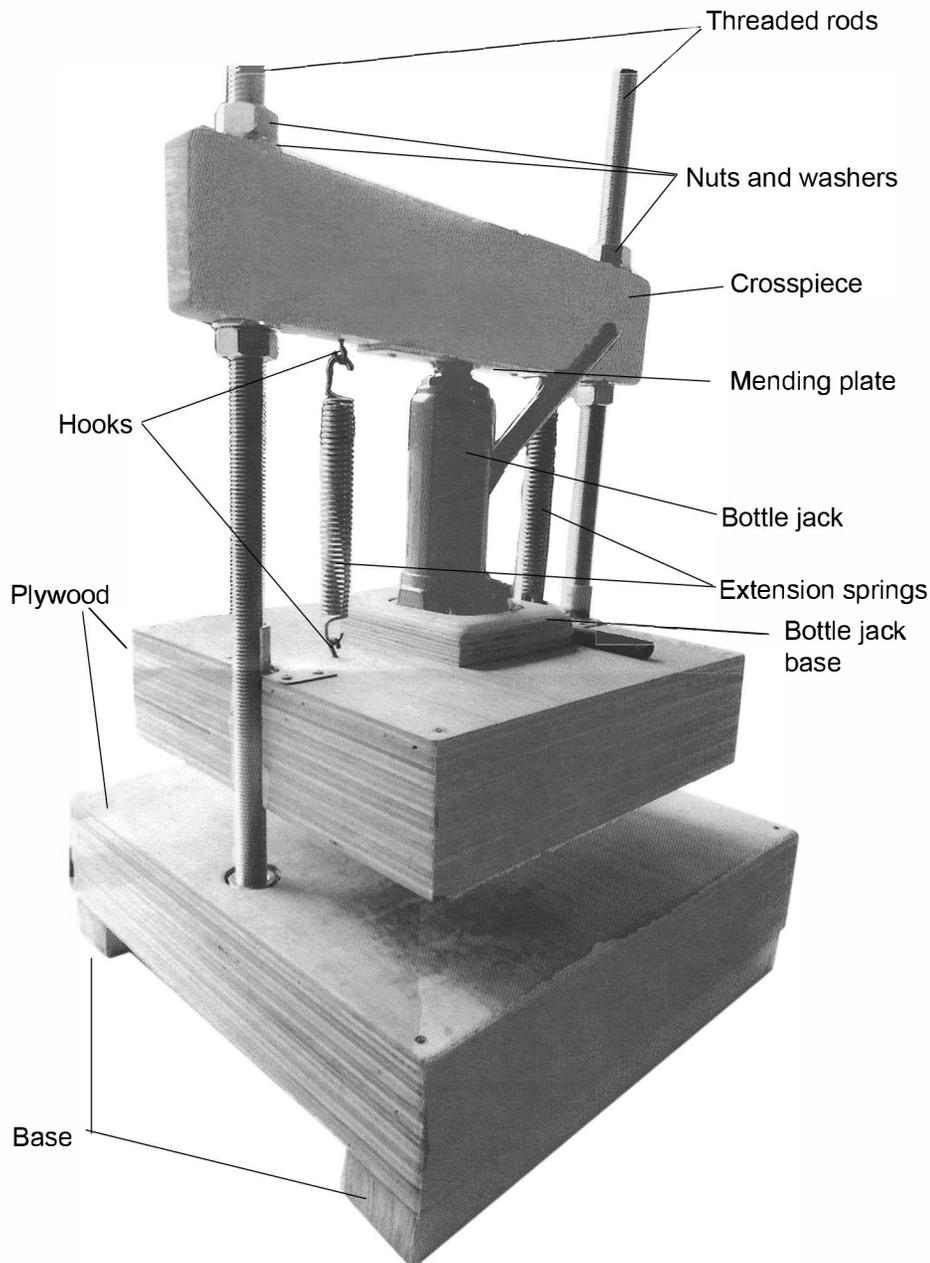
*Print Studios Manager*

*Florida State University College of Fine Arts*

\*Erik Pedersen, Publisher and owner of Drum Machine Editions, *Drum Machine Editions mission statement*

[www.drummachineeditions.com](http://www.drummachineeditions.com)

## HARDWARE STORE BOTTLE JACK RELIEF PRESS



There are many designs for bottle jack relief presses available online. They all operate on the same basic principle - you need something that can deliver a high amount of pressure distributed evenly over your plate. The key to this is using a good 2 1/2 inches or more of plywood on the top and bottom. Less than that, and you are likely to get too high pressure in the center and too low toward the edges.

All DIY relief press designs require access to shop tools. For this press, you will need a hack saw to cut your threaded rods, a drill press, a power saw and a drill. If you're a welder, so much the better but it's not necessary. These are directions for a slightly simplified version of the one seen here.

### MATERIALS LIST:

Plywood, cut into 14" squares and 11 1/4" squares, sufficient to measure 2 1/2 - 3 inches thick when stacked, plus additional to make the base.

- 2" x 4" lumber, 14 inches long
- One bottle jack
- 2 extension springs
- 4 hooks
- 1 mending plate
- 8 1/2 " nuts
- 8 1/2" washers
- Threaded rods, 1/2" dia.
- screws
- wood glue
- C-clamps
- Shop rags and water

If you look closely at the two images of this press, you'll see that the top plywood layers are grooved to allow it to move up and down along the threaded rods. Furthermore, a section of pipe has been cut and welded onto plates to make guides. These simplified instructions are for a top thickness that fits inside the rods, eliminating the need for grooves. However, if you want to go for the grooves, adjust the instructions as necessary and go for it!

#### CUT, DRILL, AND ASSEMBLE:

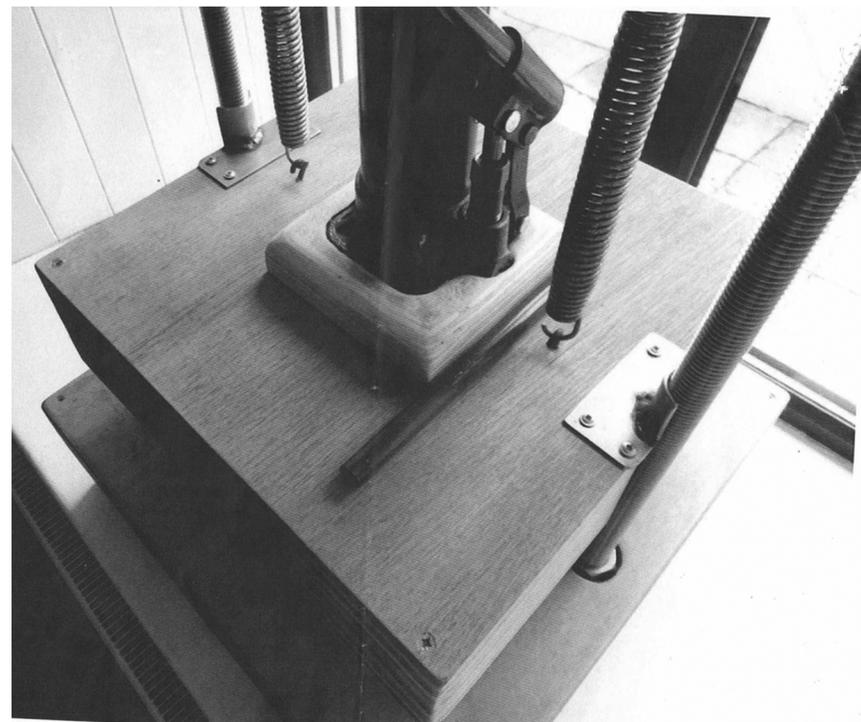
Cut your top stack of 11 1/4 inch plywood squares, and your bottom stack of 14" plywood squares. Remember, once stacked they should be two to three inches thick.

Assemble your plywood stacks by applying an even layer of wood glue to the top and bottom of the plywood pieces. Put them together, being careful to align them evenly. Continue until you have completed the stack. Ideally, you should put a screw in at each corner to further stabilize your ply stack. Clamp securely, use a damp rag to wipe up glue as it oozes out of the sides. Allow to dry and set for at least 24 hours. Complete both the top and the bottom this way.

**Crosspiece:** - measure one inch in on either side and with a drill press, drill one inch on center to allow the threaded rods to pass through. By 'on center', I mean the center of the rods should be one inch from the end of the boards, and in the middle of the board thickness. Screw a mending plate on the bottom center of the crosspiece. The top of your bottle jack will push against this when you pull your prints.

Place the crosspiece along the center of the large plywood stack, insert a pencil through the drilled holes, and mark where you're going to drill. Drill your holes. Use a spade drill bit to countersink 1/2 deep so your hex nuts and washers are set into the top.

Glue the bottle jack base onto the top center of the smaller plywood stack. If you want to get fancy, router it out so your bottle jack fits neatly into the base.



Detail, top view

Measure and mark where your hooks will go on the top of your small plywood stack, and on the underside of the crosspiece. Make sure they are aligned directly over each other. Screw in your hooks, pre-drill a small hole if you need to. Attach the extension springs.

Assemble your press using the images as a guide. You can adjust the height of the crosspiece according to the thickness of the plate you are printing. This press is useful for lino cuts, mounted or unmounted, wood cuts of varying thickness, and letterpress. It is portable, which makes it perfect for pop-up printing and on site demos.

## Home Exposure System #2: Blacklight LED Strips



This exposure system requires some very basic construction skills. If you don't have a light proof room, you'll need to build a box large enough for your lighting system and your screen. I based these instructions on a YouTube video produced by Start Screen Printing Now. You get to use cheapo party décor lights to make an exposure unit, which sounds like fun to me!

Link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AjBxgR6f9Gw>

### Materials:

**UV Led Blacklight Bar kit:** Barrina UV LED Blacklight Bar, 9W 2ft, T5 Integrated Bulb, Black Light Fixture for Blacklight Poster and Party, Fun Atmosphere with Built-in ON/Off Switch(4-Pack)

Amazon.com link:

[https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B071NT6189/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?ie=UTF8&psc=1&linkCode=sl1&tag=stascrprinow-20&linkId=99cf8e53afe90d7963bb70350622416e&language=en\\_US](https://www.amazon.com/gp/product/B071NT6189/ref=as_li_ss_tl?ie=UTF8&psc=1&linkCode=sl1&tag=stascrprinow-20&linkId=99cf8e53afe90d7963bb70350622416e&language=en_US)

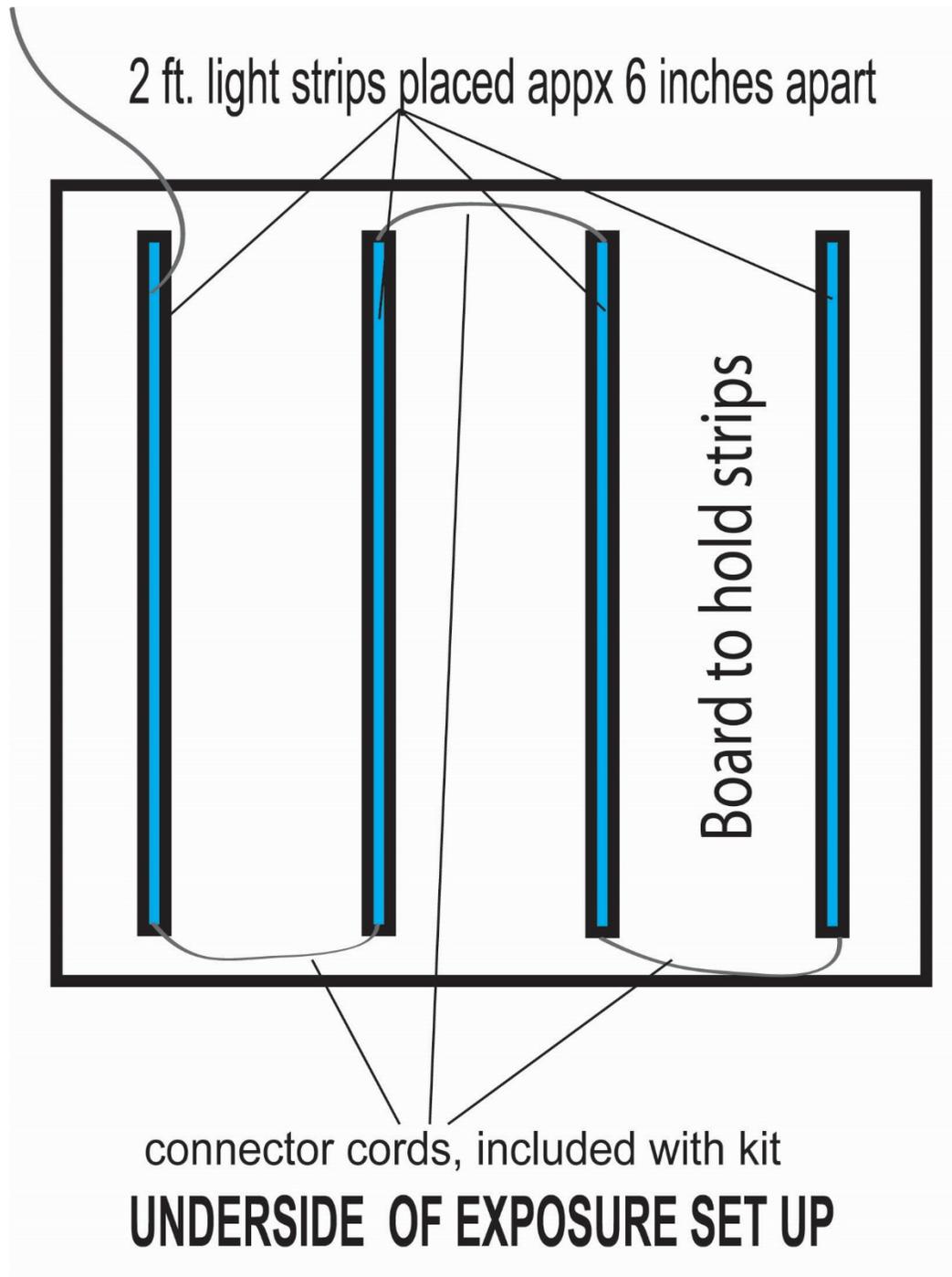
Black cloth, clothing space bag large enough to accommodate your screen, vacuum to compress the space bag. Board on which you'll attach the light strips. Lumber and hardware to construct a box large enough to accommodate your screen if necessary.

### Assembly:

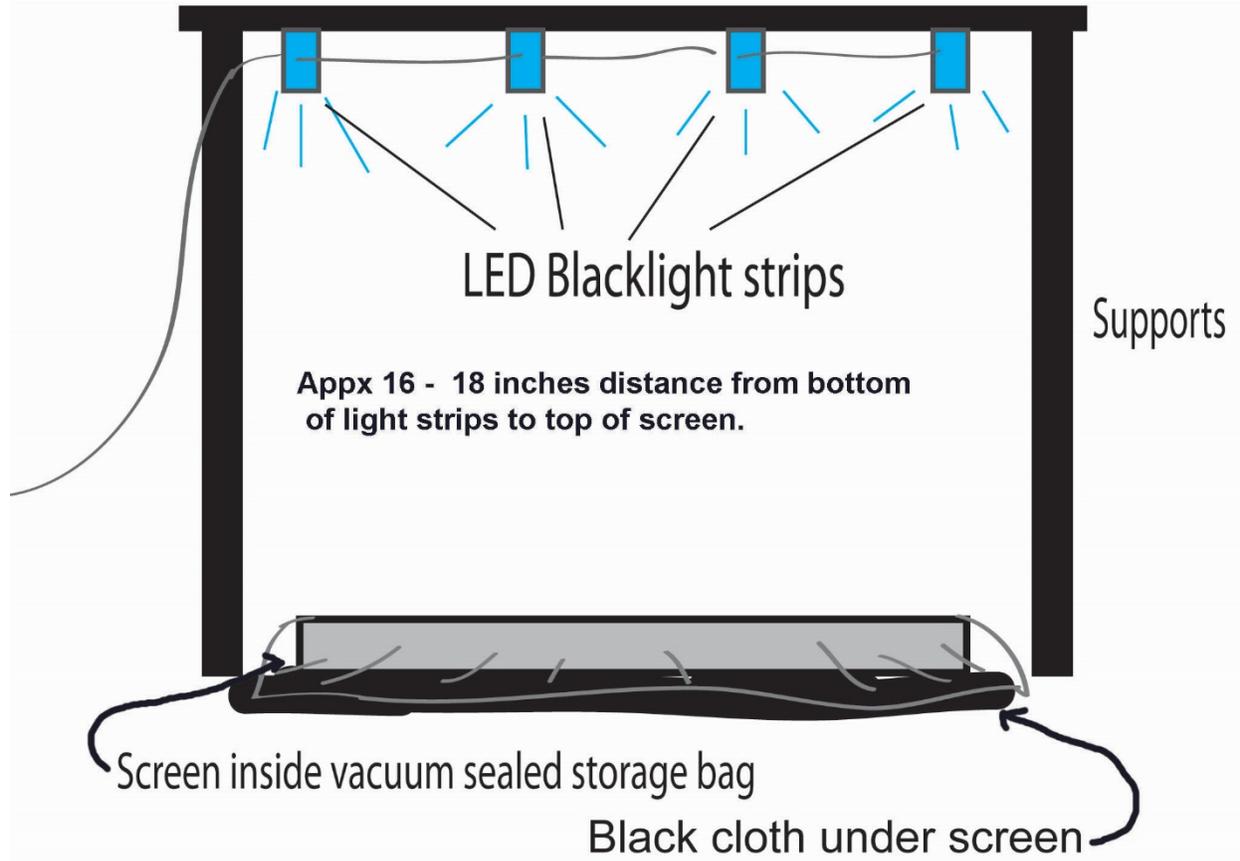
The light kit comes with clips for attaching the strips, connector cords about 7 to 8 inches long, and a cord to plug into a regular wall outlet. Assemble your DIY exposure unit using the illustrations below as a guide. One kit should provide enough light for a screen sized up to 23" x 31". Adjust your board size and the number of light strips according to the size of your screen. The Start Screen Printing Now video placed the lights a distance of 16 inches from the top of the screen and gave an exposure time of around 40 seconds. **It is important to remember that you want an even wash of light over your screen to achieve even exposure. Your exposure time will vary due to two things: the type of emulsion you use, and the distance from the light source to the screen. You will need to do your own tests to determine exposure time.**

Place your coated, dried screen in the space bag with your stencil facing down onto the face side of your screen. Put the screen and stencil in the space storage bag, and use a shop vac to pull the air out of the bag until your stencil is sealed tight onto the screen.

Put the black cloth underneath the bag and screen to prevent light reflection. Center the screen/bag/cloth set up under the lights, turn the lights on to expose. Remove screen from bag and wash out screen as usual.



Top of board



**Front view of exposure unit**

## Project One: Two-color screen print with hand cut vinyl stencils

**Materials:** Some kind of adhesive backed vinyl sheet, such as contact paper or printer label sheets. White is easiest to use, but you can use clear if that's what you have available.

X-acto knife and blades

Tape

If you have access to a printer, you can print out your designs, tape them over your contact paper, and cut through to create your stencils.

Two colors of screen print ink

*Tip – if you are using contact paper, cut a piece off for your stencil and flatten it under weight overnight. Contact paper really wants to stay rolled up, and this can make it difficult to work with. Flattening it helps.*

If you are obliged to work with non-photo screen processes for the time being, this project will get everyone acclimated to working with hand made stencils. It takes a little practice, but you'll get the hang of it.

**You will need to reverse your image to get it to print correctly.**

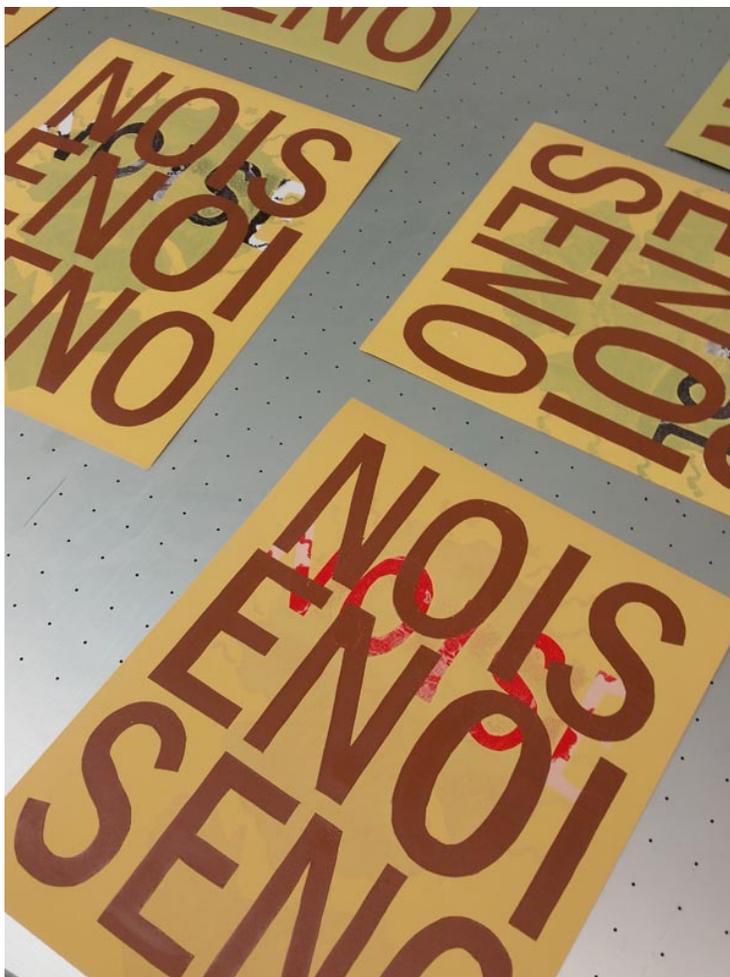
One approach: Print out each color layer on a separate sheet of paper if you have access to a printer and want to work digitally. Tape your print outs on top of your contact paper and cut through all layers to create a stencil. Once it's cut out, carefully peel off the back of the contact paper and stick your stencil to the face of your screen.

Alternatively, you can draw directly onto the contact paper and start cutting.

*Notice the word "NOISE" is spelled backward. This is so it will print correctly when the screen is turned face down for printing.*

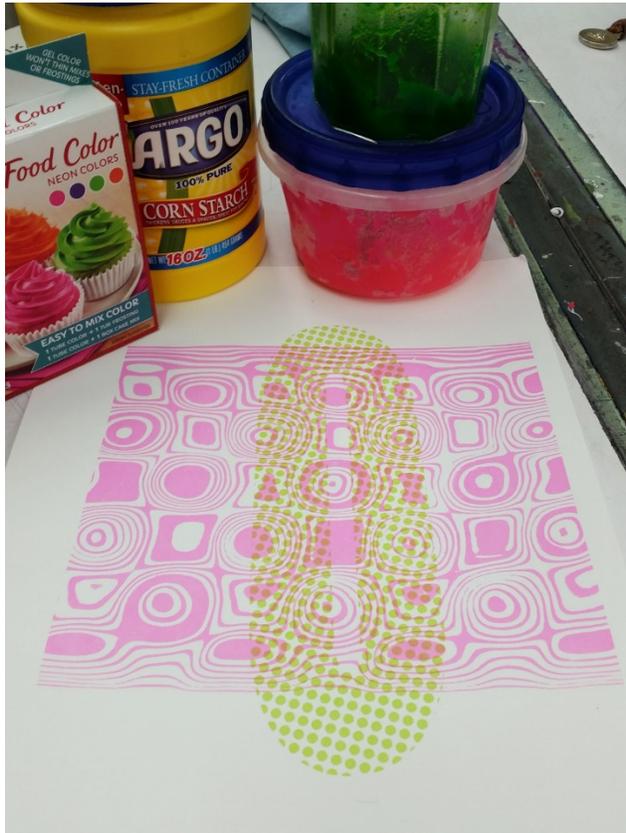
You can see three stencils here: One is cut from clear contact paper (it's possible but white contact paper is easier to work with), a second is cut from printer labels, and third, there are the cut out letters.





Test Prints: You will have a thick layer of ink on your prints, due to the thickness of the stencils. There may be some minor puddling but it will smooth out as your ink dries.

## DIY screen print transparency base and transparent ink.



**Equipment and materials:** A stove or hotplate

Saucepan

Whisk

Wooden spoon

Water

Cornstarch

Food coloring

This process takes a little patience, as you need to constantly stir your cornstarch mixture while it's heating up.

Makes one cup of transparency or ink mixture.

Adjust quantities as necessary to make as much as you want.

Process: Add one cup of cold water to a saucepan, and two tablespoons of cornstarch. Whisk to mix thoroughly, making sure there are no lumps. Heat over medium heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon. Add additional tablespoons of cornstarch and continue to stir over medium heat until your mixture thickens. It should look like regular commercial transparency base, but a little runnier.



Pour into container to cool. Your mixture will continue to thicken and set as it cools. Add to ink as needed to increase transparency. NOTE: this recipe will do in a pinch – you will want to experiment with it to see how it compares to commercial transparency base.



Pink food coloring added while mixture is hot.



Allow to cool, then stir before using.

To make transparent ink: Add a generous amount of food coloring to your cornstarch mixture while it is still hot – as soon as you pour it out of the saucepan and into a container. Mix thoroughly, allow to cool and set. Once it is set, it will have a Jello-like consistency. Just give it a good stir to make it workable, then flood and print as usual.

## Etching

Believe it or not, it is possible to create an etched image without a press. These instructions are from @losthoneytomb, who made a beautiful drypoint using this technique.

There is also a YouTube tutorial on this process:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4-yjr12LQi0>

**Materials:** Acrylic sheet (Plexiglas is a commonly used brand name) cut to size.

available at Lowe's or Home Depot

Etching needle

Etching ink, preferably Caligo, which cleans up with soap and water

Heavy duty metal spoon

Tray for soaking paper – a paint trough will work

Bath towel for blotting paper

Newsprint paper

Printmaking paper suitable for intaglio: Canson Edition or

Rives BFK are good choices.

Small piece of glass or acrylic sheet for mixing your ink

Plastic or cardboard card for spreading your ink on your plate.

Optional but helpful: non-skid cabinet lining, tarlatan, Plexiglas cutter



There are some advantages to using Plexiglas instead of copper or zinc plates. You can place your plex over your source image and trace right over it, making image transfer simple. Acrylic sheeting is far more economical and more widely available than metal plates.

Photos: Kyla Gatz @losthoneytomb

**Directions:** Draw your image into your acrylic with your etching needle. Ink and wipe as usual with tarlatan if you have some, or newsprint. It will be helpful to clean the back of your plate and then place it, inked side up, on the non-skid shelf liner for the printing process. Remove your paper from the soaking tray and blot with the towel. Remember, you need to blot thoroughly – your paper should be soft and pliable, with no shiny water spots on it.

Place your paper onto your plate. Put a sheet of newsprint over it and rub with your metal spoon to transfer the inked image to your paper. The newsprint is to prevent accidentally rubbing a hole into your paper. Remove the newsprint and carefully rub your metal spoon over the image again to transfer more ink. Be careful not to allow your printing paper to move, or your image will be blurred.



## **Public Access Printmaking Studios and Independent Publishers, U.S. Based**

### **AS220** [www.as220.org](http://www.as220.org)

Non-profit with workshops, studio and exhibition space  
Providence, RI

### **Atlanta Printmakers Studio** [www.atlantaprintmakersstudio.org](http://www.atlantaprintmakersstudio.org)

Non-profit community printmaking studio  
Atlanta, GA

### **Chicago Printmakers Collaborative** [www.chicagoprintmakers.com](http://www.chicagoprintmakers.com)

Independent print shop with classes, exhibition space, public access print facilities  
Chicago, IL

### **Drum Machine Editions** [www.drummachineeditions.com](http://www.drummachineeditions.com)

Independent publisher specializing in risograph printing  
Asheville, NC

### **Flatbed Press at Flatbed Center for Contemporary Printmaking** [www.flatbedpress.com](http://www.flatbedpress.com)

Community press, art gallery and school  
Austin, TX

### **Highpoint Center for Printmaking** [www.highpointprintmaking.org](http://www.highpointprintmaking.org)

Education, community access print shop, exhibition space, visiting artist program  
Minneapolis, MN

### **Hoof Print** [www.hoofprintchicago.com](http://www.hoofprintchicago.com)

Independent print shop offering classes and print services  
Chicago, IL

### **IS Projects** [www.isprojectsfl.com](http://www.isprojectsfl.com)

Public access printshop and book arts studio  
Ft. Lauderdale, FL

### **Printmakers Guild George Mason University**

<https://gmu.campuslabs.com/engage/organization/printmakersguild>

Student and community print shop  
Fairfax, VA

### **Printmakers Open Forum** [www.printmakersopenforum.org](http://www.printmakersopenforum.org)

Workshops offered in a variety of processes  
Oxford, PA

**Print Shop LA** [www.theprintshopla.com](http://www.theprintshopla.com)

Community resource for workshops and printing services. Artist in Residence program  
Los Angeles, CA

**Print St. Pete** [www.printstpete.org](http://www.printstpete.org)

Community letterpress shop  
Gulfport, FL

**Pyramid Atlantic** [www.pyramidatlanticartcenter.org](http://www.pyramidatlanticartcenter.org)

Contemporary art center with classes in printmaking and book arts  
Hyattsville, MD

**Risolve Studio** [www.risolvestudio.com](http://www.risolvestudio.com)

Independent press specializing in risograph printing  
Lancaster, PA

**Signal Return Press** [www.signalreturnpress.org](http://www.signalreturnpress.org)

Non-profit community center with letterpress classes  
Detroit, MI

**The Soap Box** [www.phillysoapbox.org](http://www.phillysoapbox.org)

Community print shop and zine library  
Philadelphia, PA

**Spudnik Press Cooperative** [www.spudnikpress.org](http://www.spudnikpress.org)

Community Print Studio  
Chicago, IL