

Gum Arabic Image Transfers

Gum arabic transfers are also known as paper plate lithography. You can use it to create your own background papers or you can use photographs or other favorite imagery in your transfers. Your black-and-white toner copy becomes your litho plate. From the book *Image Transfer Workshop*.

Gum arabic image transfers are totally doable! Darlene Olivia McElroy and Sandra Duran Wilson, authors of *Image Transfer Workshop*, will show you how in really easy to understand step-by-step instructions (less than 10!). They even throw in a few tips for good measure!

To learn more about or purchase *Image Transfer Workshop* by Darlene Olivia McElroy & Sandra Duran Wilson, [click here](#).

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GUM ARABIC

Gum arabic transfers are also known as paper plate lithography. It is a little more technical but worth the effort. You can create your own background papers or use photographs or other favorite imagery. Your black-and-white toner copy becomes your litho plate.



LIMITATIONS

This process can be done using a spoon or burnisher, but the process works best with a printing press. The size is limited by copier size.

SURFACE OPTIONS

Absorbent papers like rice papers, watercolor paper (smooth), canvas, natural fabric or print papers.

ARCHIVAL QUALITY

High.

NOTES

If using a watercolor or printmaking paper, you should mist them with water prior to transferring the image.

Do not use recycled copy paper because it falls apart.

The image will print in reverse, so if the image includes words or numbers, make the necessary adjustments when you print or make a copy.

For a quick cleanup use baby oil to clean the tools and Plexiglas. Wash them thoroughly with soap and water, and let them dry completely.

Toner-based images from a copier work better than those printed from a laser printer.

THROUGH THE WINDOW | Gum arabic transfers, stamps and embellishments

ARTWORK BY DARLENE OLIVIA McELROY

Materials * high-contrast, black-and-white toner-based image * background surface * gum arabic * piece of Plexiglas * palette or sheet of wax paper * oil paints (opaque paints work best) * linseed oil * scrap paper * palette knife * brayer * sponge * small container of water * printmaking or watercolor paper * pasta machine or large spoon * plastic bag * scissors * thin piece of soft foam (pasta machine only)



1 / PREPARE PAPER AND IMAGE

If you are using the pasta machine: Using the scissors, cut the paper you are transferring to and the black-and-white image to fit through the rollers.

If you are using the spoon to burnish: You are only restricted by the size of the photocopy. Trim the paper to any size you like, or keep the sheet intact.



2 / MIX PAINTS

Using the spray bottle, mist the printmaking paper or watercolor paper with water and seal it inside the plastic bag to keep it damp. (Thin rice papers should not be misted.)

Using the palette (you can use a sheet of wax paper) and the palette knife, mix the oil paints with a drop or two of linseed oil until smooth. The paint should be buttery not sticky. Take some of the paint and put onto the palette. Roll the brayer back and forth through the paint until it is loaded with paint, then set it aside.



3 / SMOOTH IMAGE ON PLEXIGLAS

Pour a small amount of the gum arabic on the Plexiglas. Using a damp sponge with a small amount of gum arabic on it, wipe down the area on the Plexiglas where you will lay the image. Place the image on that spot toner-side up. Using the damp sponge, smooth out any wrinkles. Pick up some gum arabic with the sponge and begin to work it into the image until it is gummy and saturated. Try to work in one direction.



4 / APPLY PAINT TO IMAGE

Using the loaded brayer, and starting from the center, apply a layer of paint to the image. Work only in one direction, not back and forth.



5 / WIPE OFF INK

Using the damp sponge, mix some water and a small amount of gum arabic, and begin to gently wipe the paint off the paper. The paint will stay in the black areas and wipe off the light areas. Have the small container of water nearby so you can occasionally rinse the sponge.



6 / LAY IMAGE ONTO DAMP PAPER

Take the damp printmaking or watercolor paper out of the bag. Lay the image facedown onto the paper.



7 / RUN THROUGH PASTA MACHINE

If you are using the pasta machine: Fold the piece of scrap paper around the image and the paper. Set the pasta machine on its tightest setting. Using the thin piece of soft foam to add tension, run the papers through the pasta machine.



TIP

An alternative way to remove paint is to hold the painted copy over a tray and spray it with water until the paint is off the light areas.



8 / BURNISH WITH SPOON

If you are burnishing by hand: Place the image and the paper onto the piece of scrap paper. Using the spoon, burnish the image onto the paper.



9 / REMOVE PAPER

Pull the paper off to check the transfer.

★ TROUBLESHOOTING ★

TOO MUCH WATER AND THE PAPER WILL TEAR.

In step 5, if you slop the water on, the paper will become mushy and tear. It's best to dip the sponge into the water, then squeeze out any excess water. You want the sponge to be damp, not wet.

THE PAINT DOESN'T SEEM RIGHT. HOW CAN I FIX IT?

When mixing the paint in step 2, you want the consistency of the paint to be buttery, not sticky or slippery.

If the paint is slippery, you've added too much of the linseed oil. To fix this, add more paint a little at a time until the mixture reaches a buttery consistency. Be sure to mix well after each addition of paint.

If the paint mixture is too sticky, then you've added too much paint. Add more linseed oil, a bit at a time, and mix well until you reach the right consistency.



WHY DIDN'T MY IMAGE TRANSFER?

If the image transfer is too light, there are two possible explanations. First, the pasta machine press isn't tight enough or you didn't burnish enough. If this is the case, repeat step 7 if you are using a pasta machine, or step 8 if you are burnishing by hand.

If the image has been thoroughly burnished, perhaps the copy quality is bad. The success of this transfer depends on the toner-based copy. We find older copiers put more toner on the paper. If your transfer results using your home printer or copier are poor, try a print shop; you can test images from different machines and increase the toner if necessary.